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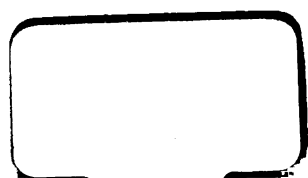
SPOILT

GUY



By

JARLEY DALE

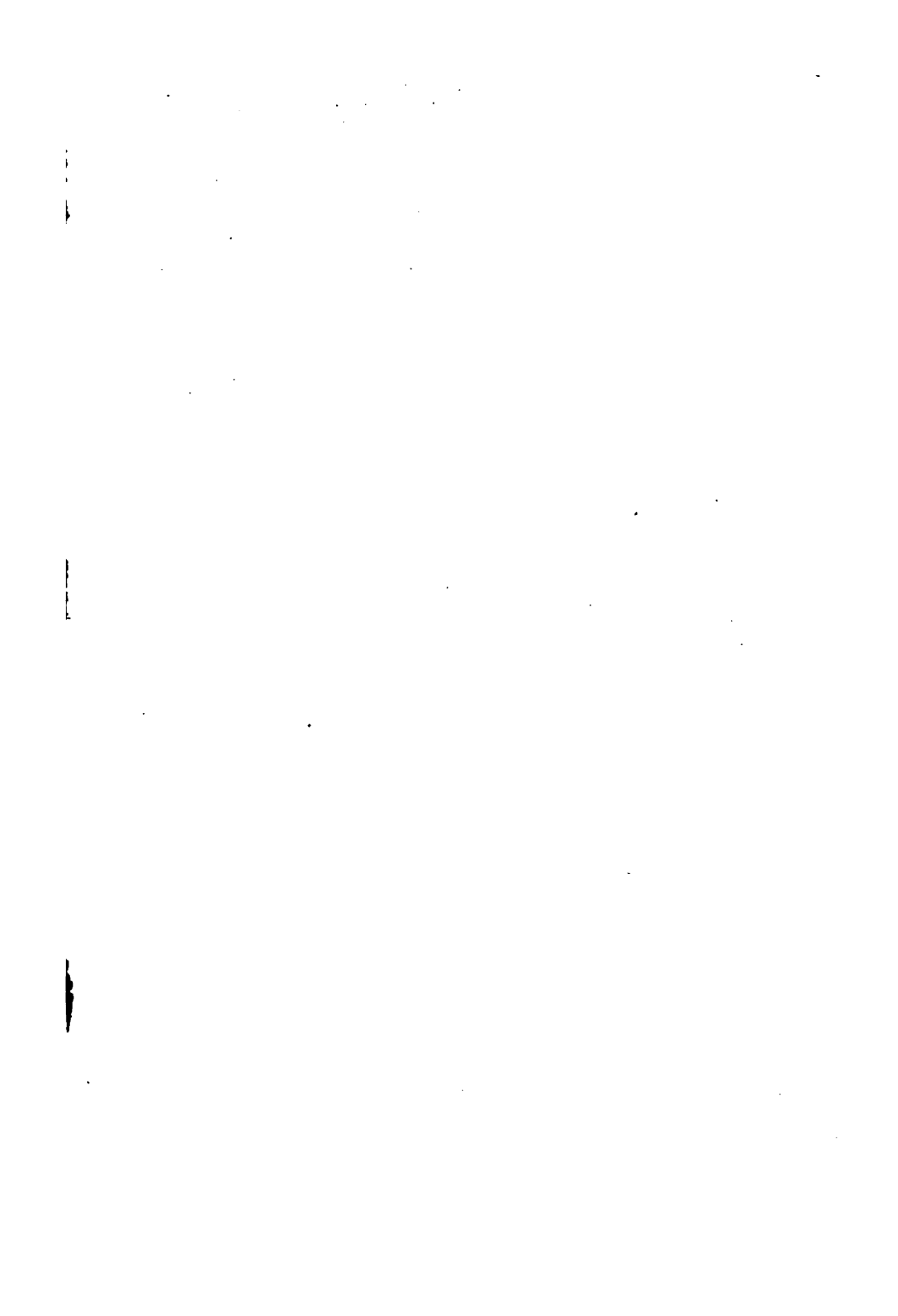






SPOILT GUY.

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GUY IS TAKEN UP FOR DEAD.—Page 81.

# SPOILT GUY:

*THE STORY OF A CHILD.*

BY

DARLEY DALE,

AUTHOR OF

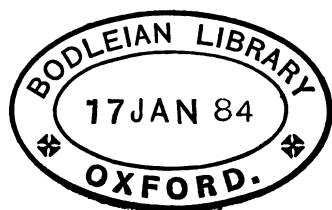
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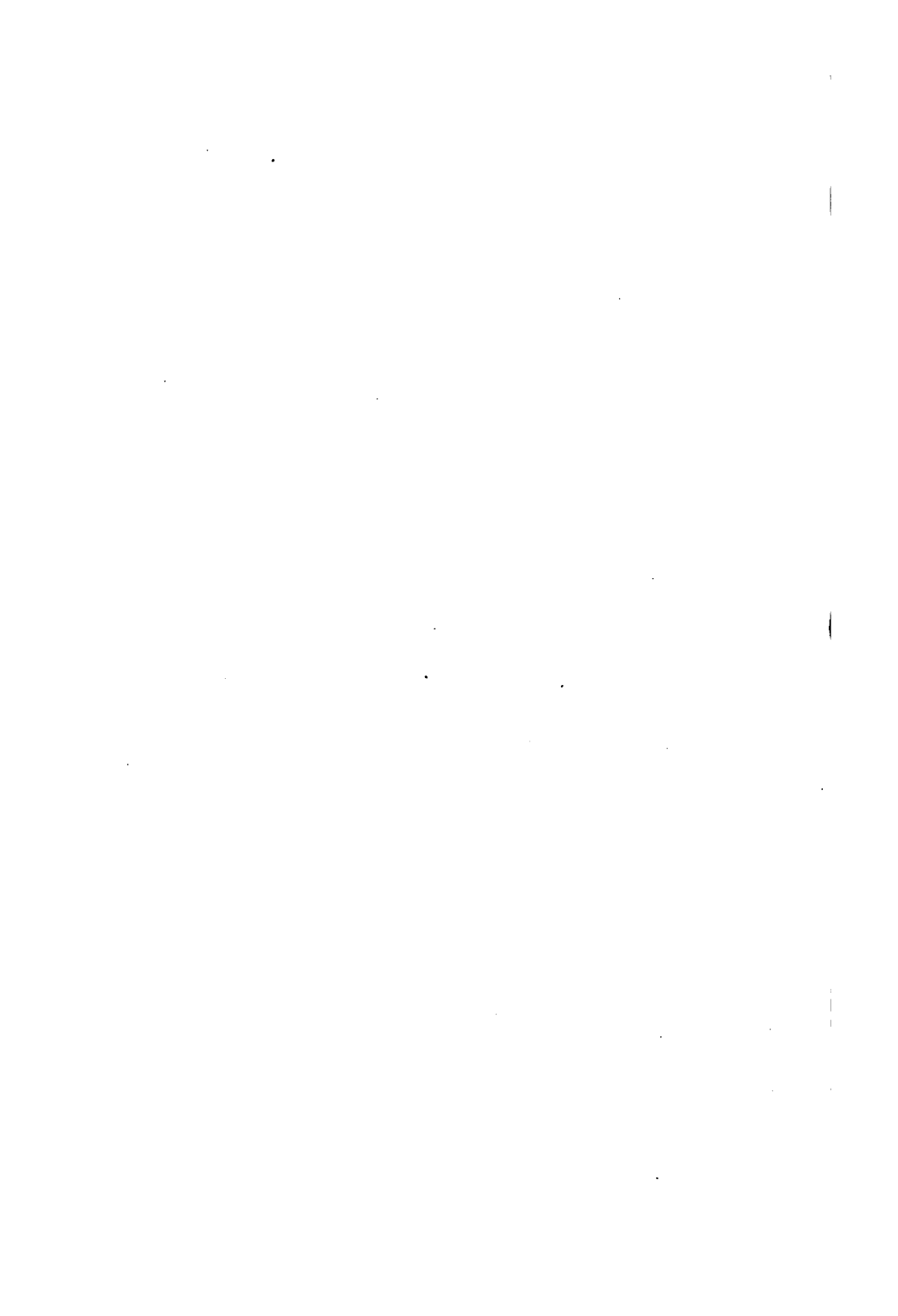
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# SPOILT GUY:

The Story of a Child.



## CHAPTER I.

### *THE VOYAGE.*

THE "Pelican" was steaming across the Bay of Biscay; the sky was dull and cloudy as November skies generally are; there was a slight breeze, but the sea was calm, so calm that many of the passengers, who were crossing the Bay for the first time, were inclined to think that the stories they had heard of its terrors were groundless. Some of them were, perhaps, even a little disappointed to find it so calm, for we are seldom contented with the weather whatever it may be, and it was certainly monotonous work, gazing hour after hour on a weary waste of waters, with only a passing vessel or a few porpoises to vary the scene.

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There were not many passengers on board—a few officers, with their wives, going to India to join their regiments; a family of Scotch children, with their parents, also bound to India, whither their father was travelling as a missionary; and a Captain and Mrs. Maitland, with one little boy, who were only going as far as Malta, made up the number of saloon passengers. It is with these last that we have to do, and they especially found the voyage dull and uninteresting, for, as they were to leave the “*Pelican*” so soon, they did not think it worth while making acquaintances among the other passengers; moreover, it was the third time that Captain Maitland and his wife had made the voyage, so it was not new to them.

Mrs. Maitland was a big woman, fair and very handsome, and perfectly aware of the fact; she was very lazy—big, fair women generally are—she did nothing all day long, but then, as her husband was wont to say, she did it very well; she had never been known to be in a hurry in her life; she hated trouble, and never took any about anything; she disliked heat, and was seldom seen without a fan; a great part of her time was spent, or rather wasted,

in fanning herself, and perhaps one reason she found the voyage so dull was that, though it was calm weather, there was wind enough to render a fan unnecessary.

Her husband was very unlike her in character ; he was a restless man, never happy unless he was doing something, and on this account could not be prevailed upon by his wife to sell out and relapse into a country gentleman with nothing to do ; he was fond of all kinds of sports, and was especially devoted to riding and horse-racing. He was a few years younger than his wife, and, being slim in figure and of a very fair complexion, looked about five-and-twenty, though he was really several years older. He was now going out to Malta to join his regiment, from which he had been absent on furlough for some months.

They had with them a little boy, Mrs. Maitland's nephew, Guy Stafford, who had lived with them ever since he was born, when his own mother died ; true, this was not very long, for Guy was only six years old, but we are inclined to think it was rather longer than was good for the child, as our readers will presently see.



Guy had two attendants, Maimée, his nurse, who had been nurse to his mother when she was a little girl, and who looked upon Guy as her own child, and Barben, a native man-servant, who had been brought over from India three years ago when the Maitlands left, and to whom the boy was so much attached that he had never been sent back to his own country. Now, however, Mrs. Maitland had heard from Guy's father, Major Stafford, that he was coming home for two years, and would meet them in Malta and winter there, and Barben must return to Bombay by the "Pelican," as Guy no longer required him. Guy was quite unconscious that Barben was so soon to be separated from him, and Mrs. Maitland had no intention of telling him till it was absolutely necessary, for fear of the scene which she knew would follow and which she dreaded.

On the afternoon in which our story opens Mrs. Maitland was lying back in a canvas deck-chair attempting to read the first volume of a novel, while her husband was skimming the third in another chair close to her, and Guy was playing with Barben near them on the quarter-deck.

Presently the child ran up to Mrs. Maitland and

told her what Barben had just told him in Hindostanee, that they would be at Gibraltar by Thursday morning if this fine weather continued.

"Aren't you glad, Aunt Clara?" asked Guy.

"Intensely glad, my pet," said Mrs. Maitland, glancing lazily round at the boy, who, with his long golden curls, violet eyes, with long silken lashes, and his sweet baby face with its perfect features, was certainly worth the trouble of turning round to look at, as most people seemed to think.

As she answered him Mrs. Maitland made a sign to Barben to lift the boy up for her to kiss, after which ceremony, performed with as little trouble as possible to herself, she relapsed into her former dreamy condition.

Guy, however, was full of Gibraltar, and prattled on about it, asking no end of questions, till at last, finding all he could get out of Aunt Clara about it was that it was insufferably hot, he returned to Barben, who was standing against the bulwarks. The two were soon engaged in an animated discussion on Gibraltar in Hindostanee, in which language Guy was more conversant than in English, for Barben had been his constant companion ever

since he could run alone. Their conversation was quite unintelligible to Mrs. Maitland, for she had always considered it the duty of her native servants to learn English to save her the trouble of studying Hindostanee.

Presently some porpoises attracted Guy's attention, and he called out to his uncle to come and look at them.

"O Uncle Jack! do come here and look at these tortoises; there are such a lot, and they keep jumping out of the sea to look at me. Do you like Guy, tortoises, do you?" and Guy leant over the ship to look at them.

"Porpoises, not tortoises, you little goose," said Uncle Jack, laughing and tossing Guy up in his arms as he spoke, for the boy's queer English was a great source of amusement to his uncle. Guy, however, did not like being laughed at; so, when he reached the deck again, he walked away with a dignified air, saying—

"It is very rude to laugh at me, Uncle Jack; Guy never laughs at you."

"How you do tease the child, Jack!" languidly remarked Mrs. Maitland. "Guy, darling, wouldn't

you like to go to Maimée and those Scotch children?"

"Yes," said Guy, "I think I should; they never laugh at me."

This was very true, for the Scotch children, who were little plain red-haired things, looked upon Guy as a very superior being, and accordingly treated him with great deference. They were singing hymns in the cabin with Maimée and their mother when Guy joined them, and a dispute arose between Pat, the eldest girl, and her brother Daniel about standing next to Guy, which Guy settled in favour of Pat, much to Daniel's disgust.

The singing lasted till tea-time, when Maimée summoned Guy to be got ready for tea.

"Don't want to be got ready. I am going to stay here. My hands are clean," said Guy doubtfully.

"My children always do what they are told," said Mrs. MacPherson reproachfully to Guy.

"What silly little things they must be then!" said Guy. "I always make big people do what I tell them."

"I am afraid you are a spoilt child," said Mrs. MacPherson.

"He is indeed, ma'am. He does not know his head from his heels; but he has such a way of getting over people, that I don't know who is to blame. It will be different when his papa comes; he will teach him to be obedient, I promise him," said Maimée.

"I wish he wasn't coming," said Guy. "I have got Barben and Uncle Jack; I don't want anybody else."

"You won't have Barben always, and a good thing too," said Maimée with a knowing look at Mrs. MacPherson. "Now, Master Guy, are you coming to be got ready for tea?"

"No; I am going to stop with Mrs. Mac; she'll get me ready to-night—won't you, dear Mrs. Mac?" said Guy, climbing on to her lap. And Mrs. MacPherson, who would have sent one of her own children to bed on much less provocation, took the motherless boy in her arms, and, long before they reached Malta, was as much disposed to humour and pet him as every one else with whom he came in contact, for Guy had a genius for winding himself round the hearts of all about him.

Guy was in very high spirits a few days later,

when they came in sight of Gibraltar, and he was told he was to go ashore for the day. At first he was delighted with the Rock, which Uncle Jack told him was like a lion, and was supposed to be the British lion guarding the Straits; but when he heard that those black mountains opposite were in Africa, he turned his back on Gibraltar, and stood, with his hands in his pockets, gazing at what was certainly a grand sight. It was a grey day, but the sun here and there pierced the clouds, casting silver streaks on the greyish green sea and catching the black mountains now and then. Over the mountains hung heavy grey clouds, covering the summits of some; they were so sublime in their grandeur, those high, black mountains, that even Guy felt their power in his own little way, and, sliding up to Captain Maitland, he said—

“I don’t like those mountains, Uncle Jack; they make me feel sorry.”

“Sad, you mean, not sorry; but why do they make you feel sad, Guy?” said Uncle Jack.

“Because they are so big and so black, and I feel all alone, like I do in bed when Barben goes away with the candle,” explained Guy.

"Well, don't look at them, then, you queer child, but turn round and look at old Gib instead," replied Captain Maitland.

The mountains fascinated Guy, though, and he stood looking at them till Captain Maitland told him, if he wished to go ashore, it was time for him to go to Barben and be dressed.

Half an hour later the passengers all went ashore together in a little steam tug, manned by handsome Spanish sailors; at the landing-place they were at once surrounded by a motley group, some old men and women with shrivelled-up faces so ugly that Guy thought they looked like fiends, and he clung to Barben to protect him. Then there were orange-boys with lovely dark eyes and beautiful teeth, and fruit-girls in their gay peasant costumes, and queer little men in tight black clothes, regular Spanish spiders, one of whom recommended himself most strongly as a guide, but Captain Maitland chose to dispense with his services, and piloted the party to a hotel, where Guy captivated a Spanish chambermaid, and was at once on intimate terms with a French waiter, who spoke broken English.

When they had enjoyed the luxury of a meal on

shore, after their week's experience of sea-fare, the Maitlands chartered a carriage and drove to the Alamada and Europa Point. The various nations represented in Gibraltar were a source of great amusement to Guy, but the Moors, in their long white robes and yellow sandals, pleased him most. He was very indignant to see mules standing motionless outside the market with huge burdens, twice as big as themselves, on their backs.

"They are cruel people to load their mules like that, Uncle Jack," said Guy.

"The largest burdens are not always the heaviest to carry, Guy; perhaps those are not so heavy as they look," said Captain Maitland.

Later in the day they went round the galleries, but these did not at all please Guy.

"I hate Gibraltar, Uncle Jack," he said, as they came down, "it is all guns and cannon and mortifications."

"Fortifications, child," corrected Captain Maitland; "the idea of a soldier's son not knowing that!"

"Well, they are all the same; it is a cruel place, and if Malta is like this I shan't like it at all," said Guy.



Up on the heights they saw a military funeral winding its way (like a scarlet serpent) round Europa Point, across the neutral ground to the English cemetery.

There was much to be seen before sunset, but they could not afford to linger long, and as it was, they finished up by being so late that the "Pelican" very nearly went without them.

Tired out by the excitement, Guy slept like a top all that night; it was rough the next day or two, for the Mediterranean is by no means always "a summer sea," so Guy had to keep pretty quiet to avoid being ill; he sat in the bows nearly all day with his uncle, watching the porpoises as they swam alongside the ship and jumped up and then disappeared again. One or two evenings the sea was all ablaze with phosphorescent light, and Barben fetched Guy out of his berth and carried him on deck, wrapped up in a shawl, to look at it.

One night, after they left Naples, it blew very hard, and the ship rocked so that Guy woke up frightened, and asked Maimée if they were all going to be drowned.

"No, child, we are all safe; say your prayers and go to sleep," said Maimée, who was sleepy.

"I have said them once," said Guy; "but if you think it will make the wind stop blowing I'll say them again." And suiting the action to the word, he knelt up in his berth and said his prayers; he was interrupted by a sudden lurch of the ship, which threw the little kneeling figure on to the floor.

"O Maimée, Maimée!" sobbed Guy, now frightened out of his wits, "we shall be drowned, I know we shall; take me to Uncle Jack."

Maimée was off her sofa in a minute, and took the terrified child in her arms; she could not succeed in calming his fears, though; so at last she yielded to his entreaties and led him to Captain Maitland's cabin. Guy entered without ceremony and woke up his uncle.

"Uncle Jack! we are all going to be drowned. I have said my prayers twice, and it is no use. Wake up, Uncle Jack, wake up!"

Thus invoked, Uncle Jack woke, and beheld a little figure with long curls, robed in white, standing shivering by his berth.

"Halloa! Guy, old fellow, what's up?"

"The sails, and we are all going down, and I want you to wake. What shall we do, Uncle Jack? Shall I say my prayers again here?"

"If you like you can; but we are all right, it is only blowing rather hard; don't be frightened, Guy," said Captain Maitland.

"But I am dreadfully frightened. Uncle Jack, did you say your prayers last night?" said Guy.

A pause.

"Because I think if you forgot," he proceeded, "you had better get up and say them now."

Captain Maitland felt decidedly uncomfortable, but he had not the heart to send the shivering little figure back to Maimée.

"Uncle Jack, did you forget to say your prayers last night? Maimée reminds me always of mine, else I might forget. Did you?"

"Ah! yes, I believe I did," stammered Captain Maitland.

"Then you had better get up and say them now, and I'll tell Maimée to go and remind you of them to-morrow night," said Guy.

"Look here, Guy, shall I get up and go and ask the captain what's the matter?" said Cap-

tain Maitland, hoping thus to avoid the prayer question.

"Yes, please, only say your prayers first, Uncle Jack. I'll say mine, too, in a whisper, so as not to disturb you ;" with which obliging offer Guy knelt down, and Captain Maitland gazed at the kneeling child at his side and wondered if he were dreaming, and the child an angel sent to remind him of his duty, when the ship gave a lurch, and convinced him he was awake by pitching him against the opposite sofa. He got into his clothes as quickly as he could, and, wrapping a dressing-gown round Guy, took him in his arms, and with difficulty stumbled up the companion-ladder to the deck, where the captain's statement that it was only blowing half-a-gale reassured Guy ; and seeing the waves were not so high as his imagination had painted them, he allowed Captain Maitland to deposit him in Maimée's cabin and return to his own slumbers, or to meditate on the rebuke the child's question so unconsciously administered.

Maimée was endeavouring to wean Guy from Barben before he left, so a few days before they got to Malta she told him in future she would dress

and wait on the child herself, and if Guy asked him to do anything for him he must refuse. Barben was by no means pleased at this, but as Maimée added it was Mrs. Maitland's order, he dared not disobey. That morning, when the bell rang for luncheon, Maimée came up to Guy, who was playing with Barben on deck, and told him to come down-stairs and be got ready for luncheon. Guy, however, refused to come.

"Barben can do my hair up here ; I like him to get me ready," he said. And turning to Barben, he told him in Hindostanee to fetch a comb and brush and do his hair. Barben looked apparently appealingly at Maimée, who vouchsafed no reply, but continued to beg Guy to come with her. Guy repeated his request to Barben, this time in a tone of command ; but to his surprise and anger Barben refused to go. At last, after a short conversation in Hindostanee, which Maimée could not understand, Guy rushed quickly down-stairs to the saloon.

Maimée followed, fondly thinking that he had yielded, but in a minute Guy returned with his riding-whip in his hand, and running up to Barben,

ordered him to kneel down; Barben obeyed, partly out of habit, and partly to humour the child, and Guy in a fury laid the whip about Barben's shoulders; he had struck the man several times when Captain Maitland and Maimée each appeared in different directions calling to him to stop; Guy looked round at Maimée, and the whip went across the man's face instead of his shoulders. A cry of pain from Barben stopped Guy's hand, and seeing what he had done, in an instant his rage was over, the whip was flung aside, his arms were thrown round Barben's neck, his lips pressed to the red mark raised by the whip on the poor black face, and master and servant wept together.

"You wicked child you! how dare you behave in that way, Master Guy?" exclaimed Maimée; "and as for you, Barben, kneeling there to let that child beat you, get up with you, do! I've no patience with you, you are worse than the child. I believe if he wanted to cut your throat you would sharpen the knife for him."

Both Guy and Barben were too much absorbed in each other to pay any attention to Maimée's oration, but Captain Maitland, arriving at the scene of

action, took Guy out of Barben's arms, and seeing the red mark across Barben's face, he said sharply :

"You are a very cruel boy, Guy, and I am ashamed of you ; look what you have done to poor Barben who is so kind to you."

Guy was crying before, but thus admonished his sobs increased, much to Barben's distress, for, like all native servants, he could not bear to see his young master unhappy. Maimée, however, quickly roused both master and servant to action by picking up Guy's whip and pitching it overboard.

Now this whip was the most precious of Guy's possessions ; Uncle Jack had bought it with the stakes Guy had won at some races—for he was a most fearless rider—some months before—and he valued it exceedingly, as Barben knew.

To throw off his long white linen coat and jump into the sea after the whip, was the work of a moment with Barben ; he was swimming hard after it before Guy had time to say more than—

"O Maimée ! you are wicked. My dear little whip that I won at the races, with a silver top, oh ! oh ! oh !"

Uncle Jack meanwhile had rushed to the captain







**BARBEN RETURNS WITH THE LOST WHIP.—Page 19.**

with the news that a man was overboard, in order that the ship might be stopped, while Maimée fled precipitately to Mrs. Maitland, to tell her what was going on.

Steam was shut off as quickly as possible, and a boat manned, lowered, and sent after Barben, who was swimming like a black retriever with the whip in his mouth after the ship, though he was so far off as to look only like a black speck on the waters from the deck. In about forty minutes the boat returned with Barben and the whip. The captain greeted the poor fellow with a storm of abuse for stopping the ship, but Captain Maitland speedily turned the tide of public opinion in favour of Barben by shaking hands with him, and saying he was proud to know such a faithful creature, who had generously risked his life, rather than see his young master vexed.

Guy's gratitude knew no bounds; he would not leave Barben for the rest of the day, and Maimée found her attempt to separate them had only had the effect of bringing them closer together.

A day or two later they reached Malta, where Barben was to take leave of them, as he went on to

India in the "Pelican." Guy had been told that Barben was to leave some day, but he looked upon his departure as a vague thing of the future, and did not trouble himself about it. Children, unlike their elders, live in the present, they have no past worth speaking of, and the future is, or seems to be, too far off to be interesting.

It had been decided at a family council held by Captain and Mrs. Maitland and Maimée, that there should be no formal leave-taking between Guy and Barben, but that the man should remain on board the "Pelican," when the others landed in Malta, ostensibly to see after the luggage, and then when the "Pelican" had sailed, the news that Barben had gone with her could be broken to the child.

This was Mrs. Maitland's plan, by which she hoped to avoid a scene, and spare herself both the pain of seeing Guy cry, and the trouble of comforting him. Maimée was rather averse to it, partly out of sympathy with Barben, and partly because she foresaw it would be a failure, but she was overruled by Captain Maitland, who agreed with his wife; and accordingly Barben was ordered to remain on board, and forbidden to say good-bye to Guy,

or to hint to him that they would never meet again in this world.

From long habit Barben obeyed these orders implicitly, but no sooner was the boat containing Guy out of sight, than the faithful creature covered his face with his hands and sobbed like a child.

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## CHAPTER II.

### MAJOR STAFFORD ARRIVES.

IT was a bright sunny morning at Malta when the "Pelican" steamed into harbour, and very picturesque the white buildings of Valetta looked, with a background of cloudless blue sky, and surrounded by the equally blue waters of her harbours. The Maitlands were met on landing by Thomas, the coachman, an old servant who had been sent by a previous ship with the horses and carriage, and who now came forward to drive them to their new home on the Marsa-Machutta road, which had been taken for them through an agent.

Mrs. Maitland did everything through agents, she employed them on every possible occasion. What else were agents for but to save people trouble? she was wont to ask. So she made her

husband give instructions to an agent in Malta to hire a house, furnish it, engage servants, and, in fact, have everything in readiness when they arrived. She even suggested that the agent should hire a pew in the English Church and a box at the opera, but Captain Maitland remarked that there was a limit to everything, and announced his intention of hiring the pew and opera-box himself; though, as Mrs. Maitland very seldom went to church, and Captain Maitland never, it seemed rather an unnecessary step to take.

Guy was so excited at landing that he did not notice that Barben remained on board; the scene was so new to him, the Maltese boatmen rowed in such a funny way, standing up with their faces towards the bows, and chattering at the top of their voices to neighbouring boatmen in Maltese, that Guy in watching them forgot all about Barben. Then came the pleasure of seeing Thomas and the horses again, and then they drove through the steep narrow streets to their new house. It was a large house facing the sea, and like most Maltese houses contained a suite of large and very lofty rooms, all opening into each other, on the first floor, corres-

ponding rooms below on the ground floor, and some attics which Thomas occupied, for the Maltese servants, who were all men, slept at home. There was a special room for Guy, which was to serve as his schoolroom and playroom; this opened into the drawing-room on one side and into his father's dressing-room on the other, for Major Stafford was to make a long stay with the Maitlands, if he did not decide to live with them entirely on his arrival.

It took Guy some time after they arrived to explore the house, and he did not miss Barben till they sat down to luncheon, when on looking round he saw a Maltese buttons instead of Barben standing behind his chair.

"Who are you?" demanded Guy civilly. "Where is Barben?" he asked next, finding a dead silence followed his first question.

"Barben is on board the ship, my darling, there is some of our baggage to look after," said Mrs. Maitland evasively.

"Why doesn't he come to wait on me? I want him. Go away, boy. I won't have you behind my chair, that's Barben's place. When is he coming back, Aunt Clara?" said Guy.

"I don't know, dear: get your dinner," said Mrs. Maitland, motioning the offending buttons to another place.

"Guy don't want any dinner, he wants Barben," said Guy, who always spoke of himself in the third person when he was either angry or aggrieved. "Thomas," he went on, "go and tell Maimée to fetch him, please."

Mrs. Maitland began to feel very uneasy as to the success of her plan, so she sent for Maimée to help her out of her dilemma.

"Maimée, what is to be done?" she asked languidly when Maimée appeared. "Guy wants Barben, and won't get his dinner till he comes."

"Then he will wait a long time for his dinner, I am afraid. Come, Master Guy, eat your dinner, there's a good boy. Barben can't come to you; I will wait on you to-day instead," said Maimée.

"No, you won't. Guy will have Barben, he tells you all, he will. Go and fetch him," said Guy, now very angry.

"My dear child, you can't have Barben; he is gone back to India," said Maimée, thinking it wiser to tell the truth at once.



"Barben gone! My darling Barben gone back to India! Guy don't believe you, Maimée. O Barben, Barben! come to Guy," and here Guy disappeared under the table and burst into a loud fit of crying; presently he reappeared, and checking his sobs, demanded—"Is it true, Aunt Clara? Uncle Jack, is it true? Is Barben gone to India?"

"Yes, old fellow, it is true that he is going; but the 'Pelican' is coaling, and won't sail till the evening," said Uncle Jack.

Hearing this Guy again retired under the table, to indulge in another fit of weeping.

"Oh! dear Guy, my pet! Don't cry, there is a dear child, you will make yourself so hot," said Mrs. Maitland, stooping down and fanning under the table, as if to fan the child's grief away.

"What is to be done?" she asked helplessly, finding that fanning, her panacea for all her own ills, proved useless in this case.

Guy presently displayed himself again to the public view, this time to reproach his elders.

"Wicked big people! Guy hates you all, he does. Why did you not tell him Barben was going

away? Conceitful things! Guy doesn't improve of it. I'll kill you, Uncle Jack, if you laugh at me. Barben! Barben! Guy wants you, do come to me."

Here the sobs broke out afresh, and Guy again subsided under the table, crying more bitterly than ever this time, till at last Captain Maitland, feeling some compunction for having laughed at the child, picked him up, and did his best to soothe him.

"Guy, poor old boy; never mind, it was a shame to laugh at you; but look here, if you will be a good boy and leave off crying and eat some dinner I will take you to the ship to say good-bye to Barben. Would you like that?" said Captain Maitland, pushing the long curls back from the little face, all disfigured with crying.

"Must he go to India, Uncle Jack? Oh! why must he go?" sobbed Guy, as Uncle Jack wiped his eyes.

"Why he wants to see his wife and all his little black children again."

"Why does he? He has me, and I am better than all those nasty little black children," interrupted Guy.

"Besides, he would not like the winter here. You know he is always miserable in the cold weather. You would not like Barben to stay here and be ill, would you?"

"No," said Guy rather doubtfully. "But it is very rude not to say good-bye to people when they go away. Guy does not like doing such rude things, so you must take him to say good-bye to Barben."

"Well, be quick and eat your chicken, and then we will go and get this parting over; we shall have no peace till it is done, Clara," said Captain Maitland.

Accordingly, as soon as luncheon was over, they set out for the harbour, and getting into a boat were soon alongside the "Pelican," which, to Captain Maitland's great relief, was already getting up steam, so there would only be time for a very brief parting scene.

"Now, old boy, you go and say good-bye to Barben, while I wait in the boat. You can leave your whip with me, I will take care of it," said Captain Maitland, observing that this precious treasure had been brought with them.

"No, thank you," said Guy, "I want it for Barben."

Is Barben going to receive a parting cut? wondered Uncle Jack, as Guy, whip in hand, was lifted on board the ship.

Barben's joy at seeing the child again was nearly equal to his grief at parting with him, and the two wept together till Captain Maitland called to Guy to come ashore, unless he wished to go to India.

"Where's your whip, Guy?" asked Captain Maitland when they were half-way across the harbour. "Did you leave it on board?"

"Yes," said Guy, "that is what I took it for; I gave it to Barben."

"I should have thought Barben had had enough of it," sarcastically remarked Captain Maitland.

"No, he had not; he was so pleased with it. He will keep it always till he dies. Besides, it will do nicely for him to beat his black children with when they are naughty, won't it?" said Guy.

"I doubt if the children will appreciate the present as much as their father appears to have done," remarked Uncle Jack.

"It was a lovely little whip, but I am glad I

gave it to Barben, because now he will never forget me," said Guy with a great sigh, that probably included the whip as well as Barben.

And Barben was comforted, and treasured the whip as a sacred relic.

One of Guy's favourite amusements was riding; he had been taught to ride almost as soon as he could walk, and he now rode splendidly for such a little fellow; for though a nervous child in some respects, he was fearless on horseback. There were to be some horse-races shortly after the Maitlands arrived in Malta, and Captain Maitland was very anxious for Guy to ride in them. Guy was only too ready to fall in with this plan, and between the two they teased Mrs. Maitland into consenting, though she did so very reluctantly, for she knew Major Stafford would disapprove of it; however, it was too much trouble to argue about the matter, so she yielded, much to Maimée's wrath.

"It is all very well for jockeys and gentlemen who have nothing else to do but to break their necks," said Maimée to Guy. "But for Christian children only just out of their cradles to be riding races is a sin and a shame. But by the time your

papa comes back, Master Guy, you won't know your head from your heels, I can see. Between your aunt and your uncle you are so spoilt, that if you don't find your head twisted the wrong way on your shoulders one fine morning, my name isn't Maimée Baston."

Her name was not Maimée but Martha, Maimée being a substitute for Martha, invented by Major Stafford and Mrs. Maitland when they were children; Maimée had grown so accustomed to be called that and nothing else, that she constantly forgot she had any other name.

In spite of Maimée, Guy rode in the races, and came in a good second, much to Captain Maitland's delight; he would have won if his legs had been long enough for him to use spurs.

The boy was nearly wild with excitement; he jumped for joy, and rushed to the carriage when the race was over, with his cheeks flushed with pleasure, tossing his cap up in the air, and brandishing his whip, a new one bought for the occasion, over his head.

Mrs. Maitland was never excited, so she merely bent forward as Guy got into the carriage, kissed

him, and told him to sit still; but nothing was farther from Guy's intentions than sitting still, so he clambered up on to the box to discuss the races with Thomas, who was finely pleased at the child's riding. Guy could not rest on the box, so he was soon off to the other end of the race-course to join his Uncle Jack, who was talking to some brother officers. Here he was patted on the back and applauded, and finally invited to dine at the mess that night. He had dined there once before, and had been a source of much amusement to all the officers, whom he kept in roars of laughter, and he was only too pleased to be asked again.

This was another proceeding that Maimée disapproved very strongly of, and she held forth largely on the subject as she brushed Guy's curls and got him ready that evening.

"It is a shame that a child like you should be dining at eight o'clock, when you ought to be in bed and asleep. Much good you'll get by it, I know. Why, what is this, pray, sir?" demanded Maimée, pausing in her lecture to turn out Guy's pockets, and producing a tiny tobacco-pouch from one.

"My tobacco," said Guy grandly; "don't finger it please, you'll spoil it."

"Spoil it, indeed! It is you that are spoilt, not the tobacco. Why, you will be ruined, that you will, if your papa is not here soon. Let me catch you with a cigarette if you dare, sir, and I'll teach you to smoke," said Maimée, pulling Guy's curls as a preliminary step.

"Uncle Jack teaches me smoking, thank you; and don't pull my hair out, Maimée," said Guy.

"I am glad indeed Major Stafford will soon be here; he will put a stop to your goings on, Master Guy, I can tell you. No more races or dining at mess, or operas or theatres, or smoking, for you when the Major comes; he would be shocked at such ways," said Maimée.

Guy was much elated by his racing, and very impatient to be off, so the final tug at his hair, with which Maimée ended her sentence, was too much for him.

"Nasty old cross-patch! I hate you; how dare you pull my hair and talk to me like that?" he exclaimed, seizing the brush from her hand and flinging it to the other end of the room.



Maimée made no reply, and Guy stalked majestically to the door, which he banged after him ; but when he got down-stairs he found he had forgotten his pocket-handkerchief, so he was obliged to run back for it ; and, on opening the door again, he found Maimée crying.

Maimée was not at all given to tears, so Guy was rather frightened, and feeling he had been very naughty, he climbed up on to her lap, and, throwing his arms round her neck, said, " Don't cry, Maimée dear ; Guy does love you, he did not mean to be cross to you ; look, he does love you, Maimée ;" and the child's cheek was laid on Maimée's, and his golden curls fell round her neck ; and what could Maimée do but hug and kiss the little prodigal ? and she did it to her heart's content.

Pembroke Camp, where Guy was to dine with Captain Maitland's regiment, was outside Valetta, about an hour's drive from the town ; it was a charming place, beautifully situated by the sea, and considered the nicest barracks in Malta. Guy had been there before, and knew all about the trophies which decorated the walls of the mess-room ; but he thought he had never seen the room looking so nice

as it did that night, brilliantly lighted, and the dinner-table all set out with the regimental plate, and a profusion of exquisite flowers. Flowers are always plentiful in Malta, though as gardens are rarely seen, the wonder is where the flowers come from, for to all appearance the island is only a white rock with prickly pear-trees and red clover scattered profusely all over it. There are gardens somewhere, for fruit and flowers abound in Malta; but one has to be there some time before one finds them out. Guy had found out some already, for he had ridden all over the island already with his Uncle Jack; he was fully prepared to lionize Major Stafford when he arrived, and he was hoping his father would prefer riding with him to driving with Aunt Clara round the harbours to Sliema and back every day. This Guy hated, and could not imagine what pleasure his aunt could derive from it, when she met the same people every day.

About a month after the races, Major Stafford arrived. Guy was sitting with his aunt one morning, describing a procession which was passing by the windows, while Mrs. Maitland lay on a sofa listening, when Captain Maitland came in and

announced that a large steamer had just been sighted, and in all probability it would turn out to be the Indian mail.

"Is father coming to-day, then? Is he, Uncle Jack? Aunt Clara, is he?" exclaimed Guy, rushing from the window to the sofa in a wild state of excitement.

"Yes, dear; but don't tear about like that, Guy darling, you will get so flushed," said Mrs. Maitland.

"You will come down and meet your brother, of course, Clara?" said Captain Maitland.

"My dear Jack! No. The heat would kill me, simply. I shall wait quietly here, and try and keep cool till he arrives; but I dare say Guy would like to go, wouldn't you, Guy?" said Mrs. Maitland, quietly fanning herself.

"Oh yes, of course! I want to go," said Guy; "besides, father will suspect me, won't he, Uncle Jack? When will it be time to start?"

"She won't be in for another hour and a half; but we will go to the Barracka now, and watch her till it is time to go to the harbour, if you like," said Uncle Jack.

The Barracka is a kind of garden, a public promenade overlooking the harbours and the sea, and a favourite lounging place of Captain Maitland's; here he and Guy accordingly waited till the P. and O. boat was quite close, and then they went to the landing-stage, to watch each little boat as it landed the passengers.

"There is your father, Guy," said Uncle Jack at last, as a tall, fair man, with a heavy moustache on his otherwise bare face, jumped out of the seventh little boat.

The brothers-in-law shook hands heartily, and then Captain Maitland drew Guy forward—for he was seized with a fit of shyness, and had shrunk back behind his uncle.

"And this is my Guy!" said Major Stafford, taking the boy up in his arms, and gazing fondly and proudly on the child, with his fair face and long curls. He was a beautiful boy, so perhaps Major Stafford may be excused for the evident admiration with which he regarded his only son.

"Do you love Guy?" asked the child, as he timidly touched his father's forehead with his lips.

"Yes, my darling," answered Major Stafford, inwardly wondering who did not.

Guy was silent on the way home, and sat earnestly watching his father, wondering whether he would be as kind as his Uncle Jack; on the whole, Guy thought not, for there was a decided look about the mouth, and a grave expression in the dark blue eyes, that somewhat awed him; and yet a bright smile often broke the sternness of the mouth, and when the eyes looked at Guy, which they did very often, they were not grave, so he was somewhat puzzled as to their owner's character.

It would have taken a much wiser person than little Guy to read Major Stafford's soul at a glance; there were lines on his face that told of intense suffering; at the same time, a mere casual observer would have judged, and rightly too, that he was on the whole a happy man, in spite of the sad look in his eyes.

Yes, he was happy now, in a way, though broken-hearted; he had been in the fiery furnace, and, like those holy men of old, he had found his Saviour in the midst, and led by Him, he came out purified, tried by fire indeed, but saved in the trying.

Seven years ago Major Stafford, then a lieutenant daily expecting his company, had married his first and only love, a beautiful girl of twenty, of whom Guy was the living image, for he had inherited his mother's golden curls, as well as her fair face. Shortly after their marriage, Mr. Stafford got his promotion, and for a year he lived in a state of intense happiness. He worshipped his sweet young wife, who in her turn was devoted to him; but there was a cloud over her happiness, even in those days of nearly perfect earthly bliss. Kate Stafford had still one wish ungratified, and for the gratification of that wish she prayed day and night, if not constantly with her lips, always in her heart; that wish was that her husband might be converted, for though as brave, truthful, and honourable as any man living, Mrs. Stafford knew too well he was not a religious man; brought up by a frivolous, worldly mother, the fac-simile of her daughter, Mrs. Maitland, it would perhaps have been strange if he had been, for though Eve fell first, and dragged Adam down with her, it is generally the woman, the mother or the wife, who first leads the man up to God.

Little, indeed, did Kate Stafford guess in what way her prayers for her husband would be granted; had she known she might perhaps have been tempted to pray less earnestly, for earthly love is very sweet, and it was hard to part for ever at twenty-one.

Not for ever, though—only for a lifetime, one little brief day, and then the meeting again—never, never to be separated. However, God, in His mercy, hides the future from us; and so Kate, in her ignorance of what was to come, prayed on, and when Guy was born the answer came. Before he was a week old the doctor told Major Stafford his wife must die, was then actually dying, before the morning dawned would be gone.

Wild with grief, almost mad with despair, Major Stafford summoned all his courage to his aid, and for her sake strove to be calm, for any excitement, the doctor said, would only hasten the end.

It was hard to leave her husband, hard to leave her new-found treasure, her child—hard, even though she left them for the Saviour she loved better than either—but, oh! how much harder for him who was left behind, with *none* to comfort him.

This was the bitterest drop in the cup Kate had to drink, to know that he was left alone, fearing he might not find peace, and yet she had faith enough to trust to God to help him ; something seemed to tell her, as she lay in his arms, the parting would not be for very long ; they would meet again at the foot of the throne. " Alick, promise me one thing before I die," she whispered a few minutes before the event came. He promised wildly anything she liked to ask ; her dying wish should be his law ; if he lived at all, it should be to gratify it. " Teach our child to love Jesus." The last word was so feeble he had to bend his ear to her lips to catch it, and with that dear Name on them they closed for ever.

Then came a terrible time ; it seemed as if the storm of God's wrath had broken over him ; the darkness was intense, but happily, awful as it was, it did not last long. After a while the darkness cleared, the thunder-cloud rolled away, and the sun came out and cheered the lonely father. When the first outburst of grief had spent itself, his promise to his wife rose before him, her dying words rang in his ears day and night ; fulfil them he must—but



how ? That was the question ; how could he teach his child what he did not know himself ? Plainly he must learn himself first. But how ? Who could teach him ? Where could he learn it ? His wife could have helped him ; she knew the secret ; but she was dead. How long would it take ? Was there time for him to learn before the child was old enough to be taught ? He knew not ; of all these things he was ignorant. One thing he knew ; he must find Jesus, for his wife's sake, for his boy's, if not for his own, and so he sought Him, and the promise, " Seek, and ye shall find," was fulfilled to him, as to all who seek diligently.

Before the grass was green over his wife's grave Major Stafford knew that it was in His loving mercy that God had taken his idol from him ; while she lived there was no room in his heart for his God. Now, though he loved her no less, he loved his Saviour also, and to that love there is no limit ; it is infinite, increasing more and more, daily on earth, eternally in heaven. To some souls the love of Jesus comes imperceptibly, gradually ; they are unconscious of its presence at first, they know not when it first began : to others it comes suddenly ;

one day they know Him not, the next they are numbered among His lovers ; they are, as it were, brought of a sudden into the presence of Him whom to know is to love, and straightway they fall at His feet and worship Him. It was so with Major Stafford.

### CHAPTER III.

#### *A ROSE WITH THORNS.*

GUY, as we know, had been sent home with the Maitlands when he was three years old ; it would not have been safe to let him remain longer in India, and so his father, much against his wishes, had parted with him. Now, however, that Guy was six years old, Major Stafford was anxious to have him under his own eye, and, mindful of his promise to his wife, he had, at a great sacrifice, exchanged into a regiment that was returning to England, or rather to Malta for a couple of years on their way home.

As the Maitlands were also to be quartered in Malta, it was a very convenient arrangement. They were very anxious that Major Stafford and Guy should live with them, partly because they could

not bear to part with the child, and partly because they were not rich, and it would make a considerable addition to their income, for Major Stafford could afford to pay them handsomely. For this reason he was willing to consent to the plan at first, though, as it was uncertain whether it would not be better for Guy to live alone with him, he gave them to understand it was only to be a temporary arrangement.

Before he had been home a month he began to doubt the wisdom of it, for he soon found Guy was completely uncontrolled, and allowed to do exactly as he pleased by every one; he could hardly wonder at this, for the boy was so sweet and fascinating, that it was easy to see it required a stronger nature than either Captain or Mrs. Maitland's, or even Maimée's, to deny him anything. Maimée occasionally lost her temper with him and punished him, but this injudicious treatment did the boy more harm than good; he only called her names and complained of her to Mrs. Maitland or Uncle Jack, who would scold Maimée before Guy for being cross to him. Major Stafford came to the conclusion that unless Guy was to grow up a self-willed, spoilt

child, he must undertake to control him himself. It cost him a great effort to resolve on this course, for he was anxious to make the boy love him, and he feared that, until Guy was old enough to see the wisdom of being made to obey, it would estrange them from each other. However that might be, Major Stafford was not a man to flinch from an obvious duty because it was against his own interests, and he loved Guy too well to spoil him; but how to set about this work puzzled him. Guy was allowed to do so many things that his father utterly disapproved of, to smoke, to ride races, to go to the opera, to dine at mess; and yet to cut off all these things at once would seem very hard to the child, until he found other pleasures to take their places. Happily Guy soon began to get very fond of his father, and his favourite place was his father's knee, listening to stories, of which Major Stafford had a large stock. Guy's particular favourite was the "Babes in the Wood;" he always cried when his father came to the part where the robins covered them with leaves. So to avoid this crisis Major Stafford used to try and vary the ending by finding the children, but this did not do at all.

"You are telling it all wrong, father," Guy would say, and would by no means be cheated out of his tears.

Then Major Stafford could sing, and he had a large collection of songs which, when delivered in his sweet tenor, were to Guy the finest music he had ever heard, except the organ in church.

Guy was not fond of going to church; he got very tired of the long service; and as his Aunt Clara generally had a headache on Sunday mornings, he used to stay with her. So Major Stafford had been home nearly a month before he vouchsafed to accompany him to church.

"Father," said Guy as they were coming home, "why did you kneel down in church before the clergyman came in?"

"I was praying, Guy."

"I did not know big people ever said their prayers, I thought it was only little children who did; Uncle Jack don't say any in church nor at home."

"Oh yes! I think he does, Guy."

"What a long prayer yours was! I said all my prayers twice and both my graces six times while

you were saying yours. What were you praying for?"

"I can't quite tell you, Guy; but, for one thing, I was asking God to teach my little boy to love Him, and to make him good and obedient."

"Does God do what you ask Him, then? and will He do what I ask Him, too?" said Guy.

"Yes, if it is for your good, He will."

"Then I shall ask Him to make me win the next race I ride in," said Guy hopefully.

"But I am afraid I can't let you ride any more races, Guy; will you mind very much?"

"No, because I am going to ride all the same; I always do what I like, and I like riding races better than anything."

"But if I tell you it is dangerous and very bad for you, and that I don't wish you to do it, you won't want to do it, will you?"

"Yes, I am sorry you don't like races, but I shall ride."

"No, Guy, you will not, for I can't let you."

Guy always spoke of himself in the third person when he was at all offended, so he now adopted it.

"Guy won't love you, father, if you say such

things to him ; he does not like big people to be rude to him ; he never says he can't let you ride races."

" Well, we won't talk about it any more to-day ; the races don't come off for nearly another month, by that time perhaps you will care more for what I wish," said Major Stafford, beginning to realise what a difficult task lay before him.

That afternoon he and Guy came into collision again. It was Mrs. Maitland's custom to read one of the parables to Guy on Sunday afternoons, and afterwards to explain it to him, and question him about it. Major Stafford had not been struck by the way either of them performed this duty on the previous Sunday, when he had been present ; Mrs. Maitland lying on the sofa and speaking as if she were telling a fairy tale, and Guy kicking about on the hearth-rug and making ridiculous answers to her questions, at which she and Captain Maitland were intensely amused.

This afternoon Major Stafford told Guy to be serious and to remember what he was doing, but unfortunately the child was in a mischievous mood. They read the parable of the marriage-feast, and then Mrs Maitland proceeded to explain it.



"Now, Guy," she said, when she had been through her explanations, "who is meant by the man who came without a marriage-garment?"

"Uncle Jack," said Guy, with a knowing look at his uncle, who was not well and was lying on a sofa in his dressing-gown.

"Guy, don't let me hear you joking on such a serious subject," interrupted Major Stafford.

"Now, Guy, darling, be a good boy and answer nicely, and tell me what was the wedding-garment the man came without?" said Mrs. Maitland.

"His dressing-gown," said Guy, with another look at Captain Maitland, who burst out laughing.

"Leave the room, Guy," said his father.

Guy was at first too much astonished to speak, but Major Stafford repeated his command in a louder tone.

"Guy won't," said Guy very decidedly, nodding his head to enforce his words.

Major Stafford made no answer, but strode across the room, and, picking the boy up in his arms, carried him out of the room to the nursery, where

he locked the door, leaving Guy kicking and screaming.

Maimée heard him and flew to the rescue, but Major Stafford forbade her to let him out till tea-time, adding that if she chose to be so foolish she could go and stay with him, which she accordingly did, and spent the afternoon alternately petting and scolding him.

That evening, when Guy went into the dining-room at dessert to say good-night, he at first maintained a dignified silence towards his father, directing all his conversation to Captain and Mrs. Maitland, much to their amusement; presently he went up to his father and said, "Are you sorry you were so unkind to Guy this afternoon? He can't love you if you are so rude to him. Promise Guy you won't do it again, will you, father?"

"Come into the breakfast-room with me a minute, Guy, will you? I want to speak to you," said Major Stafford, trying to keep his countenance, while the Maitlands were convulsed with laughter.

Guy went, and Major Stafford took him on his knee and tried to make him understand that he was the rude person who ought to be sorry for having

been so naughty, but all in vain ; Guy either could not or would not see it.

“ Guy loves you now you are kind to him again,” was his parting remark, as he kissed his father and went to bed.

Major Stafford did not leave the breakfast-room till some time after Guy had gone to bed ; he fell into a reverie, of which his little son formed the subject.

“ What am I to do,” he thought, “ with a child who has apparently no conception of authority, and who, it seems, has never heard of obedience ; who, when I attempt to enforce it on him, comes and asks me if I am sorry, and endeavours to extract a confession of my guilt instead of acknowledging his own, and finally ends up by magnanimously forgiving me, and assuring me he will continue to love me in spite of my misconduct ? Poor little Guy ! ” he went on ; “ it seems as if Clara, Jack, and Maimée had formed a conspiracy for the promotion of your ruin. If people only knew the misery they entail on children by humouring them in everything, perhaps they would see that it is cruel kindness, and for the most part only springs from selfish indolence,

to save themselves present annoyance, and to win an affection which, unless it has a foundation of reverence, is never lasting. However, the mischief has been done, and the undoing devolves on me, and Guy and I are the sufferers, for it will be as hard for me to insist on being obeyed as for him to yield; harder, probably, for until I have succeeded he will look upon me as a tyrant, created only to destroy his happiness. And then how am I to keep my promise to Kate? How can I teach the child to love God until he has learnt to love me?"

The end of this meditation was that Major Stafford sent for Maimée, and gave her to understand that in future he was not to be interfered with when he was obliged to punish Guy, at the same time reprimanding her very sharply for having indulged the child so foolishly. Whether it was the result of this conversation or not I don't know, but not long after Major Stafford had to reprove Maimée for being too harsh with his boy.

"How long is for ever, Maimée?" said Guy one night when Maimée was putting him to bed.

"Why, for ever, and ever, and ever, for always," said Maimée.

"But when for ever, and ever, and ever is done, how long will it be then?"

"Why, bless the child, for ever means for ever; it never ends."

"It must end some day, Maimée. Shall we go on living for all those evers in heaven?"

"Yes, Master Guy, if we ever get there we shall."

"But how tired we shall get of it. Maimée, I don't like for ever; it must end some day," urged Guy.

"No, it won't, and you won't wish it to, either."

"Yes, I shall, though, and I am sure it will end, too; God will be tired of it, and the angels, too, like me; so it must end; everything does; so, of course, the 'for ever' will."

"Well, never mind about for ever now; go to sleep, like a good child," said Maimée, leaving Guy to go to sleep.

After she was gone he went on thinking of eternity, till the idea seemed to crush him, and he cowered under the bed-clothes, trembling with fear, till at last he could bear it no longer, and he called Maimée back to stay with him till he fell asleep.

The next night, about nine o'clock, Guy was heard crying in the nursery; this was so unusual that Mrs. Maitland actually got up to go and see what was the matter; but Major Stafford stopped her, saying he would rather go himself. He went to the nursery, where he found Guy sobbing on his knees in his night-shirt, and Maimée holding him down by his shoulders and scolding him violently.

"I'll shake you again, you naughty boy, if you don't say it directly, sir; you don't get off your knees till you have said it, if you stop here all night," said Maimée as Major Stafford entered the room.

"What is all this about, Maimée?" said Major Stafford, taking Guy up in his arms.

"About, indeed, sir! you may well ask. Here have I been half an hour by that clock holding Master Guy on his knees, trying to make him say his prayers properly, and do what I will I can't make him say all the 'Our Father.' He is as obstinate as a mule to-night."

"I am not obstinate. You are a nasty, cruel, old thing. I wish Barben was here; I do, I do," sobbed Guy.

"You can go, Maimée; Guy will say his prayers to me to-night, and I will speak to you by and by," said Major Stafford, not over-pleased with Maimée, as he sat down with Guy on his knees, and covered him with a shawl, for the child was trembling with cold and excitement. "Now, Guy, tell me why you have been so naughty."

"Guy was not naughty; Maimée was naughty. Guy was frightened, and he feels miserable, and he wants Barben, he do," and here Guy broke into passionate sobs. Gently as a woman Major Stafford soothed the motherless boy, and when at last he was calmer and the sobs had subsided, he asked—

"Tell me why you are miserable and frightened, my darling. Who frightened you? You are not frightened of me, are you?"

"No; Guy is never afraid of people. He was frightened about 'for ever and ever,' and that was why he would not say it, and he is miserable because you called him naughty, when he wasn't naughty, and because Maimée has hurted him very much."

"Poor little man! I believe it was Maimée who was naughty, after all, this time; but she did not

mean it, Guy ; she misunderstood you, and so did I at first. But tell me, why were you frightened about 'for ever and ever' ? ”

“ Because I can't make it out. Maimée says it will never end, and I say it must, because when all the evers are over, then there will be an end, won't there ? ”

“ No, my darling, Maimée is right ; it will never end. But, Guy, I can no more understand it than you can ; no man does, only God ; but He will make us understand it too, some day, and then we shall be so happy that we shall never wish for our happiness to end, for we shall see God face to face, and go on living with Him for ever.”

“ Are you sure we shall wish to live with God for ever, father ? Shan't we get tired of it ? ”

“ No, my darling, we shall never be tired of it, because we shall love Him too well to wish to leave Him. You know when you love any one very much you like to be with them always, and are very sorry if you have to leave them, aren't you ? ”

“ Yes ; I was sorry when Barben went away, wasn't I ? But supposing I didn't love God, then should I be happy in the 'for ever' ? ”



"No ; only those who love Him will be happy. But you will love God when you know Him, and if you ask Him He will teach you to know Him. He loves you better than I can love you, Guy, dear."

"I will ask Him now, shall I, father ? and shall I say ' Our Father ' too, because I don't mind saying the ' for ever and ever ' now ?"

"Yes, if you like ; it will show Maimée you were not obstinate."

"Father," said Guy when he had finished praying, "I think I should like to live with you for ever ; I love you dearly, more than Barben, and Uncle Jack, and Maimée, and Aunt Clara."

And then Guy went to bed, and his father left the room, feeling very happy in the knowledge that he had already won his boy's love and confidence, and knowing that now the rest would be comparatively easy.

It happened that for the first month or two after Major Stafford's return the Maitlands had not been once to the opera ; they had been full of engagements, then Lent had come, during which it was closed, for the Maltese keep Lent very strictly, and so it was not till Tuesday in Easter week that Mrs.

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Maitland asked her brother if he would accompany them to the opera that night to hear *Martha*. Major Stafford, who was very fond of music, though he disapproved of theatres, was obliged occasionally to go, being on staff-duty, and this was the Governor's patronage night; but, to his great surprise, on entering the drawing-room that evening after dinner, just as they were about to start, he found Guy, dressed in black velvet and seated in state, waiting for them to come for him.

"What a long time you have been, father, to-night! we shall be so late, the overture will be over before we get there, and it is such a pretty one."

"Why, Guy, do you know where we are going?" asked Major Stafford in amazement.

"Yes, of course; to the opera. It is *Martha* to-night; we always used to go twice a week before you came back. I am awfully fond of it; so come on quick, father. I have got Aunt Clara's cloak and gloves."

"Wait a minute, Guy. Tell me, would you be very much disappointed if you did not go to-night?"

"Yes, of course; but I am going, so what's the use of asking me?"

"Listen to me, Guy. You shall go to-night as you are dressed, but you will never go to the opera again with my permission, until you are old enough to judge for yourself. It is far too late for you to sit up—besides, I have other reasons."

Guy looked up at his father in blank amazement.

"It is not the last time. Guy will go to the opera whenever he likes; he thinks you are talking nonsense; he goes everywhere he wants to, and he does not like people who contradict him, he thinks it very rude."

"I think Guy does not know whom he is talking to, but once for all understand me, Guy, this is the last time you can go to the opera," said Major Stafford somewhat sternly.

Guy dared not say any more; he was beginning to understand that, gentle and indulgent as his father was, he could not treat him as he did his Uncle Jack, so he waited in the hall, somewhat crest-fallen, for his aunt and uncle.

Presently they came to the carriage with Major Stafford, who put his sister in, helped Guy in without a word, and then went back to the house.

"Why does not father come?" asked Guy as

they drove off without him. "Is not he old enough to go to the opera? he says I am not; or don't he like it?"

"Yes, he is very fond of it; but he does not approve of your going, Guy; so he stayed at home," said Captain Maitland.

Guy looked very grave, and even when they got to the opera his spirits did not come back to him; he wanted his father, the opera without him was no pleasure, and he remembered how grave and sad his father had looked as he stood on the doorstep, and altogether he felt very uncomfortable; so before the first act was over he said to Captain Maitland—

"I think father must be very dull at home alone, Uncle Jack. I should like to go to him; will you take me, please?"

"If you like I will; but perhaps he is gone to the club, and then you will be dull."

"No, I shan't; it is nearly my bed-time, and I don't like being here without father," said Guy.

So Uncle Jack, being very good-natured, left his wife, and going into the street, called a passing pony-car, and took the boy home.

They found Major Stafford in his own sitting-

room reading an Italian novel, in which he had just become interested, when Guy and his uncle entered.

"Has anything happened?" he asked.

"Oh no; only Guy thought you would be very dull alone, so he asked me to bring him back. I suspect you could have dispensed with his company though, for there will be no peace for you till Maimée relieves guard."

"There's never a rose without a thorn," said Major Stafford, flinging his novel aside, as Guy edged up to him, and somewhat timidly climbed up on his knee.

"Well, I'll leave you to your rose, thorn and all, while I go back to mine. Good-night, Guy: don't let your father read another line."

"Good-night, Uncle Jack. Now he is gone we can have a nice talk, can't we? Are you glad I came back, father dear?" asked Guy, putting his arm round his father's neck.

"Yes, I am very glad. What made you come?"

"Well, I didn't care for the opera without you, and I wanted to see you look at me like you look now again, and I thought you would be dull alone. Why did you not come with us, father?"

"Because I did not think it right for you to go at all, and I only let you go because I could not bear to disappoint you ; but I could not take you myself, so I stayed at home."

"Shall you never go to the opera when I go there ?"

"No, certainly not, till you are a big boy at least."

"Then I shall never go again," said Guy. "I don't care for it when you are not there ; but you can go without me if you like," he added graciously, "because I can go to Maimée and Thomas, and you can't play with them like I can."

"Not exactly," said Major Stafford, holding his rose very close to him, and feeling it was very dear to him in spite of the thorns.

CHAPTER IV.

*GUY IS NAUGHTY.*

WHEN Major Stafford first came back, Guy was getting tired of Malta ; the novelty had worn off, and all the strange things that had interested him so much at first had ceased to charm him. Then neither Maimée nor Uncle Jack could often be prevailed upon to take him out, either in a pony-carriage with its black leather curtains, which in wet weather kept you dry, but made the carriage quite dark ; or in the springless gocarts, Guy's special delight, where you sat on the floor and were jolted all over the island at a furious pace. Major Stafford, however, had no objection to either of these modes of conveyance so long as Guy was pleased ; and in them they made long excursions. In one of them they would go on a botanising expedition one day,

and to a bay the next, and come home laden with flowers, or shells, or sea-weed, or bits of rock, all of which Major Stafford would arrange and add to his various collections on his return, and Guy would learn the names of most of them.

In this way he picked up a good deal of knowledge, though both Maimée and Mrs. Maitland, who between them conducted his education, declared he was most idle, and never learnt anything with them.

Hearing this, Major Stafford engaged a governess to come for a couple of hours every morning to teach Guy, who, however, soon bewitched her; and if Major Stafford had not happily overheard a little conversation between pupil and teacher one morning, her services would soon have been a sinecure.

It happened on this occasion that Major Stafford, unknown to either Guy or Miss Campbell, was in the dressing-room, which opened into the nursery where Guy did his lessons. The door between the rooms was ajar, so all that went on in the nursery was quite audible in the dressing-room. Major Stafford's attention was first attracted by hearing Miss Campbell exclaim—



"Why, Guy! what are you doing? Throw away that cigarette directly and come and do your sum."

"Shan't," said Guy. "I thought you liked smoke. You told Uncle Jack you did the other day."

"That's very different from liking to see a little boy like you smoking. I am sure your father would disapprove of it; besides, you can't do two things at once, so throw that thing away at once, or I shall do so myself," said Miss Campbell.

"Remember who you are talking to, please, Miss Campbell; Guy never lets any one be rude to him."

Miss Campbell got up, and was stooping down to take the cigarette out of Guy's mouth, when he gave her a smart slap across her face, the sound of which brought Major Stafford into the nursery.

"Guy, how dare you be so naughty?" said Miss Campbell; when to the astonishment of herself and Guy, Major Stafford stood before them both.

"Is it possible that Guy struck you then, Miss Campbell?" he demanded.

"Yes; but he won't do so again, I am sure,



GUY DEFIES MISS CAMPBELL.—Page 66.



Major Stafford. He is rather hasty sometimes," said Miss Campbell, more frightened than Guy.

"I hope not. Guy, I am ashamed of you; I did not think a son of mine would do so cowardly and ungentlemanly a thing as to strike a lady. Go to bed, sir, till I give you leave to get up again. Miss Campbell, will you kindly see Maimée, and tell her from me that she is to undress Guy and put him to bed at once; and if he ever does such a thing again, or talks to you as I heard him talking just now, will you bring him to me? Promise me that, please."

Very reluctantly Miss Campbell, who was devoted to Guy, promised; and then Guy was put to bed, and Major Stafford, who was in uniform, left the house.

About four o'clock he returned, and before he changed his clothes he went to Guy's room to forgive him, thinking his punishment had lasted long enough. To his surprise he heard a great deal of laughing and talking going on when he reached the door, and on opening it, found Guy lying in state, holding a levée; Mrs. Maitland was sitting on one side of the bed fanning herself, and Miss Campbell on the other reading aloud one of Grimm's fairy-tales, while

Captain Maitland was sitting close by mending Guy's rocking-horse.

"Here's father," said Guy. "Can I get up now, father? They've all been very kind to me, and we have had great fun; but I should like to get up now. Can I, please?"

"No," said Major Stafford. "I intended it as a punishment; but as you have made a pleasure of it, you may stay there now for the rest of the day. Clara, can I speak to you?"

Guy burst into tears, more at his father's tone than at his words, for Major Stafford was naturally very angry; but he turned to the boy before he left the room, and told him he would come and see him again before he went to dinner, for after all, he was more angry with the Maitlands than with Guy.

Mrs. Maitland knew her brother was very much annoyed, but she was not prepared for what he had to say to her, which was, that for Guy's sake he should be obliged to look out for another house, as he saw it was useless to attempt to control the child so long as he lived with his uncle and aunt. When Major Stafford made up his mind to do a thing he did it, so Mrs. Maitland did not attempt

to argue the point with him; indeed that would have been too much trouble, though she regretted the decision very much. After this, Major Stafford had an interview with Miss Campbell, upon whom he impressed the necessity of using great firmness with Guy, though he admitted he feared little could be done till they got into their own house. It was, however, finally settled that Major Stafford should remain in their present house, and the Maitlands look out for a smaller one as near as possible to him.

Guy was very penitent when his father went to see him and explained to him how badly he had behaved, and he promised to be a good boy and never to hit Miss Campbell again, even when he was angry with her. Poor Guy, like most of us, found it was easier to promise than to perform, though at the time we make our good resolutions we have every intention of keeping them. It seems so easy in moments of repentance, when we are rejoicing in the sweetness of our Heavenly Father's forgiveness, to resolve never to offend Him again, however strong the temptation may be; and then the temptation comes again, stronger than ever perhaps, and the

warm feelings are gone for the time, and then what happens? Alas! we most of us know only too well; *that* happens which only a Father's love can overlook, and *that*, how often He only knows.

So it was with little Guy. He meant to be good, for his father's smile was like the sunlight to him, and he understood now that to be naughty meant to forfeit it.

He was sitting smoking one afternoon in the nursery with his Uncle Jack, when Major Stafford walked in; he could hardly suppress a smile to see Guy with a tiny cigarette between his baby lips, for they were little more, which he was puffing at apparently much to his own satisfaction.

"Guy, my boy," said Major Stafford, "throw that cigarette away, and never let me see you with one in your mouth again."

"I shan't throw it away," said Guy; "you smoke, and Uncle Jack is always smoking, and why should not I?"

"For two very good reasons; one because I forbid it, and the other because it is very bad for you," said Major Stafford; and, walking up to Guy, he took the cigarette out of his mouth and threw it

away, and then coolly emptied the child's pockets of all his tiny smoking apparatus, confiscating tobacco-pouch, cigarette-papers, and Vesuvians.

Guy was furious, he had never been so dealt with before, and, pale with passion, he flung footstool, sofa-cushion, and the first book he could lay his hands on, at his father, one after the other.

"I hate you, wicked, rude man; nasty cruel old thing! Guy will kill you, he will," he cried, seizing a book to follow his other missiles, none of which had taken effect; but before he had time, Major Stafford caught him, and held him firmly till his fit of rage was over; it did not last long, and Guy, finding himself thoroughly conquered and quite powerless in his father's grasp, burst into a fit of tears.

"You may well cry, you naughty child!" said Major Stafford, opening the door which led into Guy's bedroom, and putting him inside; "don't let me see your face again till you come and tell me you are sorry."

Guy threw himself on his bed and sobbed as if his heart would break; his first thoughts were, why should not he be allowed to smoke as well as his



father and Uncle Jack? and why was his father so unkind to him, taking away all his smoking things, and then shutting him up in this room? Presently he remembered the footstool, and books, and his own words, and then it began to dawn upon him that it was he who had been unkind, not his father, which reflection caused another outburst of grief; but there are tears and tears, and these tears were very different from the former—they sprang from anger and mortification at having been thwarted; these were tears of penitence.

His first thought after his conscience had convicted him was to make it up, and undo as far as he could the wrong he had done; so jumping up, he knocked at the door, not daring to enter till he had received permission. This was in itself so unlike Guy that Captain Maitland guessed what he was coming for, and disappeared at another door, not sorry to escape, for Major Stafford had pulled him over the coals for teaching Guy to smoke.

“Come in,” said Major Stafford, in answer to the knock, and Guy came in, and ran sobbing to his father’s knee.

“Guy is very sorry he was unkind to you,

father," he said, throwing himself into his father's arms; "he didn't mean to hurt you with that naughty old footstool, and he won't want to smoke any more; do kiss Guy, father dear, will you? he wants to be good."

"Yes; but you must promise me never to throw things at me again. You are hardly old enough to understand how wrong it is, but you must try and remember I am your father, and you must not do so to me; will you promise?"

"Yes, I promise," said Guy, and in the same breath he added, "I suppose I can go on throwing things at Maimée, and Uncle Jack, and Miss Campbell, because they are not my father, can't I?"

"Certainly not," said Major Stafford, and then with Guy on his knee he tried to explain to him that though he as his father was entitled to more reverence and obedience than any one else, still Guy must treat all his elders with a certain amount of respect.

Guy listened, and Major Stafford hoped he had made some impression, when the boy looked up suddenly from the stud he had been trying to unfasten in his father's shirt, and said, "I think I am

a very bad shot, don't you, father? because none of those things hit you."

"Fortunately they did not," said Major Stafford, stifling a laugh.

"I wanted them to when I threw them; but I am glad they did not now, because I love you dearly, better than any one."

## CHAPTER V.

### *THE RACES.*

A WEEK later Captain Maitland announced one morning that the spring races were to come off in a week's time, and there was to be a mile race, which Guy, owing to his light weight, would have a very good chance of winning, if his father would for once waive all objections, and let him ride.

Guy was present when the subject was mentioned, and was of course all anxiety to have his name entered.

"O father! do let me ride just this once, will you please, dear father? I won't want to again; but do let me just this time," and he climbed up on his father's knee, and put his arms round his neck.

It was very hard, Major Stafford felt, to refuse him, and he hesitated a moment before he answered—

“No, my darling, I can’t let you. Don’t ask me again, for I can’t possibly agree to it.”

“Surely once won’t hurt him, Alick, do let him ride,” said Captain Maitland.

“For the sake of peace, say yes, Alick,” pleaded Mrs. Maitland languidly.

“For the sake of my child’s future peace, I say no,” said Major Stafford.

“Guy will ride, no one shall stop him; he must, he shall,” said Guy, getting off his father’s knee and working himself into a passion.

“No, you will not, Guy. I positively forbid it. His name is not to be entered, understand that, Jack,” said Major Stafford, leaving the room.

“Guy don’t care what he says; Guy will ride when the day comes, you will see,” said Guy.

“Yes, yes, darling: father will change his mind by then, perhaps,” said Mrs. Maitland.

“No; father never changes his mind,” said Uncle Jack.

“And Guy never changes his,” put in Guy.

No more was said, and Major Stafford hoped Guy would forget all about it; he intended to take him out for the day, but when the time arrived he was on duty and unable to do so; and, unwilling to give the boy a double disappointment, he gave him leave to go to the races with his Uncle Jack; and about eleven o'clock the two rode off together.

"What's in that knapsack?" asked Captain Maitland as they started.

"My flannels," said Guy.

"What's the use of taking them? you are not going to ride, you know, in anything."

"I am, I am 'terminated to," said Guy.

"But your name is not entered for the mile; besides, you must not disobey your father."

"Guy never obeys people, he does not know what obeying means; dear Uncle Jack, do let me race, will you? Guy will love you such a lot, if you do, and give you miles of kisses."

At first Uncle Jack was proof against all Guy's coaxings, but at last he yielded, unable to resist the child any longer, and consoled himself with the thought that his back was broad enough to bear Alick's reproaches.

“Well, look here, Guy, I’ll enter your name for the Strangers’ race, there is plenty of time, and I’ll lend you Brown Meg she is one of the best on the course. But what about your father?”

“I don’t know; but oh! I am glad. Thank you, dear Uncle Jack, you are a jolly fellow. I knew I should ride, so it is lucky I brought my flannels, isn’t it?”

His flannels, as Guy called them, were a pair of white flannel knickerbockers, a blue silk jersey, blue silk stockings, and a cap to match—a costume which greatly angered Maimée, though she was obliged to confess Guy looked lovely in it.

The racecourse at Malta is about two miles from Valetta—a bare-looking place, with no trees, and only an apology for grass, which was already looking parched, and in another month would be quite burnt up by the sun.

The place looked festive enough on this occasion; there were two military bands, one at each end, which relieved each other, and were a pleasant accompaniment to conversation.

There was a large crowd of less aristocratic people round the course, among which the red coats of the

soldiers predominated ; and there were tents for refreshment, and one large marquee, with luncheon, for the officers and their friends.

Guy was an object of much attraction among his uncle's friends and acquaintances, and he went about from carriage to carriage laughing and talking and amusing every one by his excitement and interest in the races.

The Strangers' race was at three o'clock, so after luncheon Guy went with his uncle to a tent to change his clothes.

"I think father is quite wrong not to let me ride races ; don't you, Uncle Jack ? because they have races in heaven, you know, and the angels run in them. I have seen them often on a windy day up in the sky ; they run as fast as fast," said Guy, donning his blue jersey.

"Those are the clouds. You have never seen an angel," said Captain Maitland.

"Yes I have, often ; they have beautiful wings, and they are soft and white just like the clouds, so I suppose that's how you have made the mistake, Uncle Jack," said Guy.

"Well, never mind the angels now ; there is the



warning bell. Come along; Brown Meg will be chafing if we keep her waiting."

Guy was trembling with excitement as Captain Maitland mounted him.

"Give her her head, Guy, and be sparing with the whip. She is as gentle as a lamb if you don't strike her—a touch is enough," were Uncle Jack's parting directions.

The Strangers' was a flat-race of half-a-mile, which was twice round the course. There were six horses started, but Brown Meg was the best runner, and, as Guy was so light, the odds were greatly in his favour.

As they passed the winning-post the first time Guy was leading by three or four lengths; but it was evident to lookers-on that the second horse was held back by his rider for the first round.

"Go it, little one!" "Well done, Guy!" "Bravo, curls!" "Five to one on the child!" "Keep her going, master!" were some of the shouts that fell unheeded on Guy's ears as he entered his second round. The second horse is gaining on him now; they are half round the course; and now they are neck and neck. Guy, wild with excitement,

cuts Brown Meg's side with his whip; she swerves violently on one side, rears, and Guy is thrown just as the second horse passes the winning-post.

He is motionless; the other horses dash past him horribly close; the barrier is removed, and a crowd gathers round the child. Uncle Jack elbows his way through them, pale with terror.

To his dying day Captain Maitland never forgot the agony of suspense of the next few moments. What if Guy were dead! He should feel he had been as guilty of murder as many a poor wretch who has been hanged for it. What would his brother-in-law say? what but he had killed his only child! And Maimée and Clara, how should he face one of them again?

He was not a praying man, as Guy had discovered, but, as he rushed through the crowd and bent over the poor little figure lying so terribly quiet, he prayed with his whole soul that the child might be spared.

Gently as a mother he lifted up the little body, apparently lifeless, the eyes closed, lips and face deadly white, the long curls floating over his arm as he carried the child tenderly into the nearest

tent, the crowd falling back at the sight of his pale, terror-stricken face.

"That's his father; how white he looks," cried one.

"Ah! as bad as the child," said another.

"Poor little fellow, he'll never ride another race," most truly remarked a third.

"He is killed, as sure as I am alive," said another.

"More shame to them that let a child ride a horse like that," cried a fifth, which remark met with general approbation.

## CHAPTER VI.

### *THE CONSEQUENCES.*

ONCE inside the tent Captain Maitland hesitated for a moment where to lay his precious burden. A doctor, however, had followed him in, and in a trice he arranged some rugs on the table and signed to Jack to put the child on them.

They opened his jersey, sprinkled his face and chest with water, and tried all the usual restoratives, but at first all their efforts were in vain.

"Is he dead?" groaned Captain Maitland; "is he dead, doctor? For Heaven's sake, don't say he is."

"He is not dead yet," said the doctor ominously. "Get me some brandy."

Captain Maitland paced the tent two or three times in agony, and then, stopping and leaning over the unconscious little figure, he cried—

"Guy! Guy! wake up; speak to your Uncle Jack, dear little Guy."

At last the eyelids quivered, the lips moved, and, as the doctor poured some brandy down his throat, Guy whispered faintly—

"Father."

"Thank God!" gasped Captain Maitland. "Guy, are you hurt? have you any pain? Tell Uncle Jack."

But Guy looked as if he heard nothing and knew nothing. He only answered again, this time as though he were in pain, "Father," and relapsed into unconsciousness.

"It is concussion of the brain," said the doctor presently when he had examined Guy. "There are no bones broken; but I can't tell how it will go with him yet. He must be taken home at once as quietly as possible. Get a carriage, some one, and if you will allow me, Captain Maitland, I will accompany you."

Half-a-dozen people immediately offered their carriages, and the doctor, anxious to get his patient away from the well-meaning friends who would crowd into the tent, seized the most roomy of the proffered

carriages, and, depositing Guy on the back seat, jumped in with Captain Maitland, and, ordering the coachman to walk his horses, they drove slowly off.

Major Stafford was out when they got home, and Guy was carried up-stairs, undressed, and put to bed before Mrs. Maitland knew he was in the house; then Maimée, sobbing and wringing her hands, told her what had happened.

For once in her life Mrs. Maitland moved quickly—she even forgot her fan, as she hastened through Major Stafford's rooms to the nursery where Guy was. Her first action was to send for two more doctors, explaining to the young surgeon who had brought the boy home that he was an only child, and that everything that could be done must be done to save his life.

She then seated herself by the bedside, sent Maimée for her fan, and reproachfully inquired of her husband who was to break the news to Major Stafford.

Poor Captain Maitland, who felt little short of a murderer, undertook to do it himself. It was a bit of retributive justice he rather delighted in inflicting on himself, and when a little later Major Stafford's

voice was heard in the hall he went to meet him and said—

“Alick, there’s some terrible news for you. I took Guy to the races and put him in for the Strangers’ race. He was thrown, and is in great danger. I don’t deserve your forgiveness, I know, and I dare not ask it; but, if I could save Guy by doing so, I would willingly lay down my life for his.”

Major Stafford made no reply, perhaps because he dared not trust himself to do so; his first thought was of Guy, and he made his way at once to the nursery. The child was still unconscious, but from time to time he recovered sufficiently to open his eyes, and then relapsed again into a kind of stupor. For two days and nights he lay in this state, and all that time his father scarcely left his bedside; he and Maimée nursed him entirely, and would not admit any one else except the doctors and occasionally Mrs. Maitland into the room. The races took place on a Tuesday, and on Thursday evening Guy seemed a little better; he was conscious for a longer time than ever since his fall; he recognised his father and spoke to him, and when he fell asleep again,

Maimée begged her master to go and get some rest before his night watch began.

Major Stafford went first to the dining-room to get some dinner; there he found his brother-in-law, whom he had not seen since Tuesday, though he had heard from Maimée that Captain Maitland had not left the house since the accident happened, and that he waylaid her at every opportunity to ask how Guy was. Now, pale and haggard, he rose as his brother-in-law came into the room, and looked so ill and downcast that Major Stafford's conscience reproached him for not having sought him out before, and as he offered his hand to him, he felt that Uncle Jack had something to forgive as well as himself.

Captain Maitland eagerly seized the outstretched hand, and though neither spoke a word, both felt, as they stood for some moments with their hands clasped, that all was forgiven between them.

From that evening Uncle Jack shared the nursing with Major Stafford and Maimée, and in a few days Guy was pronounced out of danger and allowed to get up for a few hours every day.

One evening, in the dusk, his father and uncle



were both with him, when Guy, who was sitting on his father's knee, mentioned his accident, to which he had never before alluded.

"Father," he said, "it was very wicked of me to ride that race when you told me not, wasn't it?"

"Yes; but you will try and be obedient now, won't you, my poor little man?" said Major Stafford.

"Yes; were you angry with me, Father, when you knew I rode that race?"

"Angry, my darling! how could I be angry with you when you were half killed? No, I was not angry, but I was dreadfully sorry."

"Was God angry with me, Father?"

Major Stafford hesitated a moment before he answered.

"Yes, Guy, I am afraid He was. Listen to me a minute or two, will you, while I try and explain it to you. God is angry with us all when we do wrong, but He is always ready and willing to forgive us, when we ask Him for His dear Son's sake. You know He came down from heaven and was nailed to the cross to save you and me"——

"And Uncle Jack," put in Guy.

“And Uncle Jack. He died for each one of us just as though there had been no one else in the world to save. And then God said He would save every one who believed in Jesus, and forgive them their sins for Jesus’ sake, because He bore the punishment for them; but we must ask Him to forgive us, and try to be good and do as He tells us. Do you understand?”

“Yes, I think so. Shall I ask Him to forgive me? and, Uncle Jack, hadn’t you better ask Him too? because you should not have let me ride that race, should you?”

But Uncle Jack slipped quietly out of the room without answering.

## CHAPTER VII.

### *GUY'S THANK-OFFERING.*

How true it is that our greatest trials are often only blessings in disguise! That accident of Guy's was indeed a great trial to them all, but it was the means of accomplishing the very thing Major Stafford had well-nigh despaired of doing; it taught Guy the value of obedience, and at the same time drew him closer to his father than he had ever been before.

The wisest of us are but helpless creatures after all; we plan and strive and waste our best years and strength in endeavouring to accomplish that which God can do in one instant if it pleases Him; if we only prayed more, and trusted more in God and less in ourselves, how much better we should get on, even in worldly matters.

But we must go back to Guy, who, as soon as he was well enough, resumed his walks with his father. One morning they visited a church they had never before been to, and Guy was much struck by the votive offerings which were hung in profusion on the pillars and before the various altars and shrines.

"Father, what are all those wax dolls and arms and legs for? Are they toys for all the little children to play with when they come to church?" he asked.

"No," said Major Stafford; "they are what are called thank-offerings; when these people have had bad arms or legs, or when their little children have been ill and got well again, they get a wax figure of the baby who has been ill, or the arm or leg that has been broken, and hang it up in church as a thank-offering to God for hearing their prayers and curing them. Do you understand?"

"Yes, I think so," said Guy; and that afternoon he made Maimée take him to a toy-shop, where, after a great deal of hesitation between a brown horse, which seemed to possess special charms, and a wax doll with long golden curls, he at length decided in favour of the doll. Maimée preferred

the horse, reflecting that she would probably be required to dress the doll, so she told Guy he was too big for a doll, and that only girls played with dolls.

"You know nothing about it, Maimée," said Guy politely; "big people have dolls to play with, babies are their dolls; besides, I am not going to play with this one."

So the doll was bought, and Maimée had to dress it according to Guy's directions; he was very particular about it, and very indignant because Maimée suggested a blue frock as a suitable costume.

"I hate girls; it is a pretty little boy doll, Maimée, and I want you to dress it like me when I have on my racing things," insisted Guy; and the doll was accordingly dressed in knickerbockers and a blue jersey, and when finished put into a drawer, visited and looked at half-a-dozen times a day, but never played with.

On the following Sunday, Guy announced his intention of going to church, and when it was time to start went to the dining-room to fetch his father, his prayer-book in one hand and his doll in the other; just at the door he fortunately met Maimée,

whom he had been trying to avoid, for he felt instinctively she would disapprove of his proceedings.

"Why, Master Guy, I thought you were going to church! Come, give me that doll, there's a good boy—I will take care of it till you come back; you can't play with dolls in church."

"I am not going to play with it, Maimée."

"Then what do you want it for?"

"It is a thank-offering," said Guy gravely.

"A thank-offering! Bless the child, what does he mean?" cried Maimée to the walls.

"When people have been ill and got well again, they give God wax images as thank-offerings. I thought everybody knew that. There is a church near the harbour full of them," said Guy.

"A church near the harbour! why, child, that's a Popish place; we don't do such things; give me the doll, do, and don't have such nonsense;" and Maimée angrily snatched the doll from the child's hand, her whole Protestant nature up in arms against such practices.

Guy burst out crying.

"You nasty, wicked old thing!" he sobbed

"God won't love you ; He does like thank-offerings, and I bought my doll for Him, and I have not played with it at all, though I wanted to. I will have it."

Here Major Stafford opened the dining-room door, and found Guy struggling with Maimée.

"What's all this about, Maimée ?" he asked.

Maimée explained, and Guy, who was not satisfied with her account of the matter, added—

"I want to give it to God as a present, because He did not let me be killed : and I think He'll know what it is meant for, don't you, father ? because it is just like I was when I rode the race."

"My darling, God does not want dolls ; but I will tell you what would please Him much more than taking that doll to church ; you shall go with me after service and give it to one of my orderly's little girls who is ill and has no money to buy dolls with. God will like that better, and it will please the poor child. Will that do ?"

"Yes ; but I would rather take it to church and give it to God myself, like those other people do, please, father."

"Those other people are ignorant, and don't know how to please God, poor things; but He tells us in the Bible that if we give even a cup of cold water to one of His little ones, we shall have our reward. 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto Me,' He says; that means He will look upon our gifts to His poor as if they were gifts to Him," said Major Stafford.

This satisfied Guy, and after service he went with his father and presented the doll to the soldier's sick child. The Maitlands were much amused when they heard the story of Guy's thank-offering, but to Major Stafford it was scarcely a laughing matter; to him there was something very touching in the child's simplicity, and the offering, small as it was, possessed some of the attributes of an acceptable offering; it was accompanied by real self-denial, for Guy spent all his pocket-money on it, and what was harder, refrained from playing with it; he had been misunderstood and scolded by Maimée, and his sacrifice was salted with some bitter if childish tears.

Although the lesson Guy learnt from his accident was a very good one, still it could hardly be ex-



pected it would completely cure him of trying to have his own way ; it taught him that obedience was wiser and better for him than disobedience ; but though he now knew what he ought to do, he did not always wish to do it.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### *GUY IS INVITED OUT TO DINNER.*

ONE morning, about three months after the races, Guy received a card of invitation to dine with Captain Maitland's regiment on the following Thursday, which happened to be his birthday.

"O Aunt Clara! is it not nice? Do you think they knew it was my birthday? And wasn't it kind of them to have the invitation printed, because they know I can't read writing?"

"They always have printed cards, dear; but I am sorry they sent it, for I am nearly certain your father won't let you go. How tiresome your Uncle Jack is! He ought to have told them not to ask you again."

This was the first time Guy and his father had come into collision since his accident, and he forgot

all his good resolutions, and exclaimed, "Guy *will* go, of course he will ; Father can't stop him ; besides, he is sure to say yes."

"I am afraid not, dearest ; but here he is to answer for himself," said Mrs. Maitland, as Major Stafford came in in uniform.

"What is it, Clara ? I have not a minute to lose, I have a parade at eleven, and it is now half-past ten."

"Guy has had an invitation to mess at Pembroke Camp on Thursday ; it is his birthday, you know ; may he go ?"

"Father, I must go, do say yes, will you ?" pleaded Guy.

"I can't, Guy ; but you shall have a party of your own here instead. Clara, will you send out invitations to all the children we know, and decline Guy's for him ? I must be off. Good-bye, my darling. I am sorry to refuse you this pleasure, but we will have fine fun here," and Major Stafford stooped down to kiss the boy ; but Guy in a fury pushed his father's face away, and rushing to the writing-table, exclaimed—

"Guy don't care what you say, he will go ; you

will see if he don't, you cross thing, you ! Guy is going to write and tell the officers he is coming, and they will make you let him."

But Major Stafford had no time to spare, so with the words, "Remember, Clara, he is not to go," he left the room.

For the next hour Guy was very quiet, he occasionally tore up a sheet of writing-paper ; at last he finished his note to his own satisfaction, and brought it to his aunt to direct. It was very short, and written in large text-hand, sloping gracefully down the page from left to right ; Mrs. Maitland could scarcely repress a smile as she read it ; it ran as follows :—

"DEAR OFFICES,

"Guy Will come on fursday.

"GUY STAFFORD."

"Now direct it, please, and let me post it, will you, Aunt Clara?"

"Not yet, dear ; wait till I have written the other notes, and then you and Maimée may post them all."

"There is no use in writing the other notes,

none of the children will want to come if I am out."

"Well, I must write them, because your father told me to do so, and you had better go to Maimée."

Guy did not see his father again till the evening, when he came down to dessert. He went as usual to his father's side, expecting to be taken on his knee, but to his astonishment, Major Stafford did not take the slightest notice of him, but peeled an orange for Mrs. Maitland, and talked to her and his brother-in-law, as if Guy were not in the room. When the orange was finished, Major Stafford gave it to his sister, and still ignoring his son, began to peel a second.

"Perhaps it is for me," said Guy inwardly, but this hope was soon dispelled, for Major Stafford ate it himself.

"Guy, would you like an orange?" asked Mrs. Maitland at last, and Major Stafford moved the dish within Guy's reach without speaking a word, or even appearing to see him. Guy coloured up to the roots of his hair, and walked slowly across the room to his aunt, saying in a dignified tone, "Thank you, Guy does not want an orange."

Mrs. Maitland, seeing he looked inclined to cry, took him on her lap and talked to him, to divert his attention.

"Do you see all those parcels on the dinner waggon, Guy? what do you think they are?"

"Don't know," said Guy, with his head on her shoulder, and casting a furtive glance across the table at his father.

"Well, I will tell you; they are crackers and bon-bons which your father brought home to-day for a good little boy's birthday party. Can you guess who he is?"

"No," said Guy; "don't know any good little boys who have birthday parties at home."

"I know a naughty little boy who does not deserve to have a birthday at all," said Major Stafford.

Guy made no answer, but felt very unhappy; it was evident his father was angry with him; why? Guy knew perfectly well, and he also knew that, until he gave up all idea of going to Pembroke Camp on Thursday, there was no hope of a reconciliation; he had just come to the conclusion that to quarrel with his father was even a worse calamity

than not dining with the officers, when Maimée came for him.

"Good night, Father," said Guy timidly, going up to his father's seat.

"Good night," replied Major Stafford, as distantly as if he were addressing one of his soldiers, and not even looking at the child.

This was too much for Guy's pent-up feelings, and leaning his head on the table, he burst into tears.

"You can go, Maimée; I will bring him to you," said Major Stafford; and taking Guy by the hand, he led him out of the room.

"Do you remember your promise to me after you were ill, Guy?" asked Major Stafford, as soon as the door was shut, sitting on the stairs.

"Yes," sobbed Guy, "but I don't want to go to Pembroke Camp now; I only want you to be kind to me again."

"It would be very unkind of me to let you go there, but you don't know how hard it is to me to refuse you anything, my poor little man. Don't cry any more, we will make it up," and he took the boy in his arms and kissed him, and Guy went to bed comforted.

The weather was now so hot in Malta, and Guy, who had not regained his strength fully, seemed to feel the heat so much, that Major Stafford resolved to take him to Gozo for a month. He had another reason also, and that was to wean Guy from the Maitlands, who still often indulged the boy more than was wise. So it was settled that on their return from Gozo, Guy and his father should live alone.

Major Stafford succeeded in hiring a part of a farm-house in Gozo, about two miles from Rabato, the only town. It stood in an orange garden, and beyond the farm-buildings at the back was a large vineyard; over the front of the house climbed a vine whose clusters of grapes were now ripening, and hung in profusion over the wall; the house was surrounded with pastures, well stocked with sheep, Maltese sheep, so like goats that it was hard to distinguish between them; and corn-fields, now green with cotton, for the Gozo harvest is over in June.

Here they had shade and comparative coolness, and if abundance of figs, and grapes, and other fruits, as well as flowers in profusion, and even groves of trees, could make them so, certainly Guy



and his father were happy in Gozo. But they were never idle even in Gozo, where simple existence seems enough for most people. Every day they made some excursion. Sometimes they would take a boat and row round the precipitous coast to some cavern which they would explore, and return with a rare fern or some wonderful shell, or a fine specimen of sea-weed. Another day they would each mount a mule and visit some place in the interior, where they frequently came across volcanic-looking hills, which Major Stafford would climb to see if there were any signs of former volcanic disturbances, but he never discovered any. Then they would ride over to some bay, where Major Stafford would sketch, while Guy played or collected shells and sea-weeds. Very pleasant these rides were. They frequently went through gardens of apple-trees, which, to eyes accustomed to none but the prickly pear-trees of Malta, was indeed a refreshing sight. Nor was Guy's education neglected all this time; before he went back to Malta there was scarcely a plant or a shell in Gozo of which he did not know the name. Besides all this, Major Stafford had taken his religious teaching, and, indeed,

for the present, his education, entirely into his own hands, though in Gozo they did no lessons, except every morning they read the Bible together, and Major Stafford explained it to Guy. By degrees Guy's ideas on religious subjects became less crude, though, like most children, he was inclined to put a very literal translation on what he learnt, but as his father never laughed at his odd questions and remarks, he soon talked to him quite freely, and told him all his childish puzzles.

These happy days passed only too quickly for both father and son, and at the beginning of October, much against their mutual wishes, they returned to their home in Malta, to find the Maitlands settled in their new house a few doors off.

## CHAPTER IX.

### *THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH.*

A FEW days after their return to Malta, Major Stafford had to ride over to the south of the island, to select a suitable place for the troops to encamp on the following day, when there was to be a march out, and he took Guy with him.

By this time Guy had completely recovered from the effects of his accident, so far as his nerves were concerned; he was as fond of riding as ever, and as fearless. It was a lovely morning when they started, and they had a very pleasant ride out. They stopped about two hours, ate their luncheon on the beach, and at three o'clock set off for home, laden with plants and shells to add to their collections.

“I am afraid we shall have a storm before we

get home, Guy; the wind is rising, and it looks very black in front of us. We shall have to ride quite into it," said Major Stafford.

The month of October is the worst for thunderstorms in Malta; they always rage there when the summer breaks up, and come on very suddenly. As Major Stafford remarked, they were riding straight into this one. They had not gone more than a mile when it burst upon them; the wind in their faces blowing furiously, and raising clouds of dust; the lightning playing around them, and each flash followed almost immediately by a cracking peal of thunder.

It was a long straight road that they had to traverse, with no village nearer than three miles, and Major Stafford fully realised the danger they were in; though fortunately their horses were Arabs and did not mind the lightning.

"I am glad it does not rain, Father; aren't you?" said Guy, trying to make the best of it.

"No, dear; I wish the rain would come; and I think I felt a drop or two."

Just then a fearful flash of lightning seemed to play round the bits of the horses, and Major

Stafford looked round at Guy, who was rather behind, in terror lest he should be hurt.

"Are you all right, my darling?" he asked, as soon as the thunder allowed his voice to be heard.

"Yes, but I don't like it, Father. What shall we do? It is beginning to rain so fast, and the wind blows me nearly off Brown Meg."

"We must go on, my boy. Don't be frightened; God will take care of us. There is a village about two miles off where we can shelter. Never mind the rain; it will only give us a bath, and the lightning is less dangerous now. Let us have a race;" for seeing the child's courage was failing, Major Stafford hoped the excitement of the race would counteract his fear.

This had the desired effect; for as Guy urged on Brown Meg, he forgot wind, lightning, and rain, his blood was up, and he rode on, now a little in advance, now a little behind his father, as utterly indifferent to wind and weather as Brown Meg herself. In a quarter of an hour they were in Citta Luce, a village about two miles from Valetta. Here they took refuge in the church, having tied their horses up in a shed close by,

till the storm was over; and in half an hour's time they were able to ride home, which they reached safely, though wet to the skin.

Guy was immediately popped into a warm bath by Maimée, and put to bed, and consequently was no worse for his soaking; but his father, though he took every precaution, got a chill, and the next day was very unwell. At first he thought it was merely a cold, and for a day or two remained in the house, but did not think it necessary to send for a doctor; till, finding he got no better, Mrs. Maitland persuaded him to do so.

The doctor came, and ordered him to bed at once, telling Maimée her master was suffering from typhoid fever: and that though at present there was no danger, it would be two or three weeks before he could get up again. Guy became his constant companion, insisting on being allowed to remain in the room all day, and sleeping in the adjoining dressing-room at night. It was with difficulty he could be prevailed upon to go out, even with his Uncle Jack, until the doctor told him that unless he had a ride every day, he would be ill himself, and unable to nurse his father.

Maimée was furious at Guy's being allowed in the room at all, although the doctor explained that the fever was not contagious, and at first tried to keep him out by main force; but Guy fretted so at this, and his father when delirious could not bear him out of his sight, that the doctor took the matter in his own hands, and allowed the child to remain.

The boy's presence seemed to soothe the patient even when the fever was on him. The little white hand that was laid so softly on the burning forehead apparently possessed some magic charm. The child appeared to know instinctively all his father's wants, and without troubling him to speak, would slip quietly off the bed, and fetch milk, or lemonade, or beef-tea, as his father required them; and Major Stafford never refused what those childish fingers offered him.

Next to Guy, Uncle Jack was the best nurse, and Guy would never leave the bedside to go for a walk or a ride unless Uncle Jack would take his place; and by degrees the child's will became law in the house. He seemed to have all the wisdom of a grown-up person, and no one had the

heart to refuse him anything when they saw his pale anxious little face.

Sad and anxious as he looked, the child had no idea his father was in danger, and no one ventured to tell him. "He will know soon enough without telling," was Maimée's comment when Major Stafford had been ill a fortnight, and the doctor had expressed an opinion that unless he rallied very soon there was very little hope.

So Guy lay by his father's side, and dreamt of what they would do when he was well again; and when Major Stafford was able to talk, Guy prattled away and planned excursions enough to last a lifetime.

He wondered why the doctors, for there were two now, used to look so grave, and call him "poor child," and "poor little fellow." Why did they pity him? he was not ill; it was poor Father who ought to be pitied.

Then Mr. Benson, the clergyman, used to come every day to read to Major Stafford, "because I can't read well enough for Father," Guy explained to his uncle. He never stayed in the room on these occasions. He used to say before he left—



"Please ask God to make Father well, Mr. Benson," and then he would wait in his own room till he heard Mr. Benson go.

"Are you well yet, Father?" he would ask when he came back. "I thought perhaps God did not hear Mr. Benson, so I have been asking Him too."

"That's right, my darling; God will hear us if it is His will," Major Stafford would answer.

At last Major Stafford tried to break to Guy that he would never be well again. "Guy," he said one afternoon when they were alone, "I am going a long way off, for a long, long time. Will you try and be very good after I am gone?"

"I shall go with you," said Guy.

"But, my darling, you don't understand. I am going where you can't come yet."

"Where are you going, Father?"

"To heaven, I hope, Guy."

"I shall go too, then. How do we get there?"

"Guy, don't you understand? I am going to die. God is taking me away from you, but He will take care of you when I am gone, and some day, when He pleases, we shall meet again."

"I don't know what dying means," said Guy.

"But if you are going to heaven, father, I shall ask God to let me come too; there will be plenty of room for me, and we can enjoy ourselves up there. I think it will be better than Gozo; besides, I shall never leave you—never—never!"

Major Stafford saw it was hopeless, Guy could not or would not understand; so he let him prattle on about what they should do in heaven, on which subject he held peculiar views of his own.

Another time Major Stafford told him a story, but with little better success. It was one morning when Guy had brought a vase of fresh flowers into the room, that his father bethought him of an allegory.

"I am going to tell you a story, Guy."

"Oh! then you are much better to-day, Father. I am so glad," said Guy, settling himself to listen in a chair by the bedside, where he could take hold of his father's hand.

Major Stafford smiled sadly.

"No, my darling, I am afraid I am weaker to-day; but listen to my story. There was once a beautiful garden full of lovely flowers, but there were also a great many weeds in the garden, and

they grew so close to the flowers that it was impossible to root them up without rooting up the flowers also, and, indeed, no one but the Gardener knew which were weeds and which were flowers ; for some, that to ordinary people seemed to be only weeds, so tiny were the flowers and so poor the soil in which they grew, were very rare plants, full of beauty in the Gardener's eyes ; whereas some of the gayest flowers in this garden he knew to be only weeds, in spite of their gaudy tints ; and some of the very rarest flowers grew in shady places where no one ever saw them except the Gardener, and these were the flowers He loved best of all. Now there was one flower in this garden that had a young shoot "——

" Was it a weed or a real flower ? " interrupted Guy.

" I hope it was a real flower, for one day the Gardener came to the plant and said, ' If this plant does well and blossoms freely I shall transplant it to my garden in heaven, for I love it. I have nursed it carefully through the winter, and watched over it ever since I first planted it here ; but I will let it stay a little longer till that young shoot grows strong enough to stand alone.' The plant was very

glad when it heard this, and it watched over the young shoot very carefully, and protected it from the wind and the rain, and shaded it from the sun, until, instead of growing straight up as the Gardener liked to see it, the plant began to droop over the young shoot, and this was bad for both, for, so long as the parent-plant hung over the young one, the young plant was prevented from feeling the sun's rays, and without the sun it would have died. So the Gardener came again and said, 'I shall send an angel to-morrow to carry the parent-plant up to my garden in heaven, for I want the young plant to grow strong and bear flowers, and the old plant hangs over it too much.' So the next day the angel came and carried away the parent-plant to heaven to bloom there; and at first the young plant drooped and seemed as if it would fade away and die; but the Gardener came and watered it and tied it up carefully; and in time it revived and grew strong, and blossomed, and became a far handsomer plant than the old one, and the Gardener loved it dearly, and said He would take that also one day and plant it in His garden in heaven."

"Is that all?" asked Guy.

"Yes, dear. Do you understand it?"

"No; I don't want to. It is rather a silly story, Father, I think—don't you? If I had been the young plant, I should have made the angel carry me up as well."

Major Stafford was too weak to talk any more, so he gave up trying to make Guy understand that he was about to die.

The end came a day or two later. It was evening, and only Captain Maitland and Guy were in the room. Guy, as usual, was lying by his father's side. They had been very quiet all the afternoon, for Major Stafford had slept a good deal, and he was too weak to talk much.

"It is getting very dark," he said at last.

"Yes," said Guy, coming closer and laying his cheek on his father's; "but Guy is with you, Father dear, don't be afraid."

"My little darling, be good when I am gone," said Major Stafford. "How very dark it grows," he added after a minute or two.

"I will light the lamp," said Captain Maitland; but, alas! no lamp can light the dark valley through which Major Stafford was passing—it is

only the Light of the World who can pierce that darkness.

"Your face is getting very cold, Father," said Guy, kissing the poor, pale cheek; "and so are your hands. I think I had better rub them in mine to keep them warm," and the child sat up and rubbed the cold hands, when Major Stafford spoke again—

"It is so light now. Kiss me, Guy."

Guy kissed him, and Captain Maitland came to the bedside, with a candle in his hand, to see that his brother-in-law was gone to the land of light and love.

"O Uncle Jack! how white he looks! and why does his mouth go like that?" said Guy, frightened.

"He is dead, Guy dear. He will never move or speak again."

"He will speak to me, I know. Father, speak to Guy. He is not naughty now, Father dear; speak to him. It is your little Guy talking to you. Oh, do wake up, Father! Don't he hear me, Uncle Jack? Oh, why don't he speak?"

But Uncle Jack could not speak either for a few moments. He was sobbing like a child. At last he mastered himself, and taking hold of Guy, who

was kneeling on the bed, and leaning over his father's body, said—

“Guy, your father is in heaven; he can't speak or hear you. That is only his body left there; he is in heaven.”

“Why did he go to heaven without me? I must go after him. Can't I take my body off too like he has?”

“Come away with me, Guy, will you? You can't go with your father, he is dead. Come with Uncle Jack, he will be very kind to you. You shall never want a father while Uncle Jack lives.”

CHAPTER X.

*WAITING FOR THE ANGEL.*

AT last Guy suffered himself to be led away, and as he left the room he looked at the bed on which all that was left of Major Stafford lay, and said, "Father is in heaven. Guy don't want to look at that any more;" and nothing would induce him to enter the room again, though Maimée tried hard to get him in, as she thought the sight of his father might make him cry, for Guy did not cry. He wondered why every one else did.

"I suppose it is because they are not going to heaven yet like me. I shall be with him in a few days, so I don't want to cry," he said. And so he never shed a tear. For the next few days he seemed to be constantly expecting something, though he was very quiet and sad; he got out all the shells



and plants his father and he had collected, dusted and arranged them all most carefully, and then packed them all up in a large empty box he found in the nursery.

"Father has forgotten them, he was in such a hurry to get there, so I must take them with me when I go," he said to Maimée when she asked what he was doing.

Maimée could not bear to see the child behaving in this unnatural way. It frightened her ; for she was so fond of him that the very idea of his death was unbearable, and she had a notion that unless he could cry he would be very ill, so she determined he should go to the funeral. That was her last hope. If the sight of the coffin being lowered into the grave did not move him, nothing would, she thought. So Guy went, and was chief mourner. It was a military funeral, and as Major Stafford was much respected, not only his own regiment, but detachments from all quartered in Malta followed him.

It was a beautiful and touching sight that long procession, headed by the band, and then Major Stafford's charger, led slowly on ; then the coffin

wrapped in the Union Jack, and covered with flowers, his hat and sword on the top ; and then his boy following, with his long curls streaming on his shoulders ; behind him his Uncle Jack and a few intimate friends, and his brother officers all in uniform ; and then the troops. But Guy did not cry, not even when the coffin was lowered, and he heard Captain Maitland sobbing behind him. He turned round, put his hand into his uncle's, and whispered—

“ Don't cry, Uncle Jack. Father is not there ; he is in heaven watching for me.”

Then the volleys were fired, and the procession filed back to a lively march.

The next day was Sunday, and Guy went to church with his uncle. When they got to the door, Captain Maitland said, “ Where shall we sit, Guy ? ”

“ I am going to Father's seat ; you can go somewhere else, please, Uncle Jack,” said Guy, and he went up the aisle by himself to Major Stafford's pew, near the pulpit. Major Stafford always sat by the door, and Guy next him. To-day Guy walked in and seated himself in his own place, leaving his

father's seat empty. Before the service began some strangers were shown in, and one gentleman was about to take the empty place by the door, but Guy stopped him—

“Go higher up, please; that's father's place.”

The gentleman looked at the little figure in deep mourning, and wondered why his father allowed such a child to go to church alone, but moved as requested.

When the psalms began, Guy could not find his place. For a moment his lips quivered as if he were going to cry, but as quickly he seemed to remember something, and a look full of hope came over his face; he then climbed upon the seat, and handing his prayer-book gravely to the lady in the next pew, he asked her to find his place.

She handed the book back with the tears in her eyes, as Guy took it and said, “Thank you; Father always found my place.”

After service, Captain Maitland took Guy for a walk, and a very sad walk it was, for Guy, who generally hopped, skipped, or ran along, now walked slowly and sadly by his uncle's side.

“Where shall we go, Guy?”

"It is all the same everywhere now Father is gone; where you like, Uncle Jack; the Barracka is your favourite walk, isn't it?"

So to the Barracka they went, Uncle Jack trying in vain to keep up a conversation. Then they sat down, but Guy, who was generally so much interested in the harbour, and knew the name of every big boat in it, now never even glanced at the sea, but sat with his head on the top of the wall gazing up at the sky.

"I wonder what Father is doing, Uncle Jack. Do you think he can see us?" said Guy.

"I don't know, old fellow, perhaps he can."

"I am afraid he thinks I have forgotten to go to him, but I have not; I shall be there by next Sunday, I hope."

"Don't, Guy, don't talk so, we can't spare you yet; you must live, and be a good, noble man like your father was. Just look at that man-of-war, she only arrived this morning; we must go aboard her one day soon."

"If I have time," said Guy, and soon after they went home.

The next day Guy was very sad and lonely. He

missed his Father every hour : there was no one to read the Bible with before breakfast, and so Guy read it alone ; afterwards it was no use learning lessons, because there was no one to say them to. It was a bright, fine morning, and Guy sat looking out of the nursery window, wishing his father were there, for then they would have been off after lessons on some expedition.

"I wonder when God is going to send an angel for me," he said to himself. "I am so tired of waiting ; there's a ring at the hall door bell. I wonder if that's the angel," and he ran to the top of the stairs to see.

It was Mrs. Maitland come to take Guy back to her own house, for Uncle Jack was his guardian, and Guy was to live with them again. She had been too much upset by her brother's death to come before, and Maimée would not suffer Guy to be moved till after the funeral.

"I am glad you have come, Aunt Clara, because now you can hear me say my lessons. You must be very strict, please, because I shall have to say them again to Father, and he can't bear me to bring them up half-learnt."

"Very well, dear, but hadn't you better leave them for to-day? Look, you want a new copy-book, there are only two or three pages left in this; suppose we order the carriage, and go and buy a new one."

"It is not worth while, Aunt Clara. I don't even think I shall have time to finish this one; I shall have a better one in heaven, and we can get one of the angels to set the copies. Father can't write very well himself, he says, but I think it is lovely writing, don't you?" and he turned over the pages of his copy-book as reverently as if it had been a Bible.

Mrs. Maitland was obliged to hear his lessons, and then she persuaded him to go for a drive before his early dinner. In the afternoon he was left to himself while his aunt went to sleep. Maimée was at the other house packing up his clothes, and seeing after things, for as Guy was to live with the Maitlands, Major Stafford's house was to be given up at once.

He felt very lonely, poor little man, sitting and thinking of his Father, and wondering when the angel would come for him. At last the thought

occurred to him, perhaps his Father was really in that coffin after all. He put the idea away several times as impossible, but it came back to him, and at last he decided he would go up to the Cemetery and call him. If he were there he must have awoke by now, and if not he must be in heaven.

He started without any one's knowledge. It was very cloudy, though it did not rain, when he set off. He felt very sad that afternoon; every place reminded him of his Father. There was the church they so often went to; that was the street that led to the harbour; there was Government House, where Guy so often went with his father to turn out the guard, and the sentries saluted him as he passed out of respect to his Father's memory.

His heart was very full when he reached the Cemetery. "God is such a long time sending for me; and yet I do ask Him to send quick," he thought. He knew the place he wanted to find; it was next to a tall broken pillar, broken by the wind, he supposed. Yes, there was the pillar, and Guy ran up to it, but what was his dismay when, instead of the open grave, with the coffin in it, as







GUY IS FOUND ASLEEP ON HIS FATHER'S GRAVE.—Page 127.

he expected, he found nothing but a mound of earth.

"I forgot they always cover them up," he said; and throwing himself on the grave he burst into a passion of tears, the first he had wept since his father's death.

"Father! Father! where are you? Can't you hear your little Guy? Tell God to send the angel for me. O Father! do come to Guy;" and then the sobs choked his voice, and at last, worn out with the violence of his grief, he sobbed himself to sleep.

About two hours after he left the house, Maimée went in to see after him. Mrs. Maitland was awake now, and supposed the child had gone to Maimée, till she appeared without him.

It was raining hard now, and Maimée, who guessed at once where the child was gone, set off directly with a waterproof and an umbrella to look for him, and there, fast asleep, and wet to the skin, she found him on his Father's grave. He had a smile on his face, and looked so happy that for a minute or two Maimée hesitated to wake him; but being a very practical person, she soon overcame her reluctance, shook him, and woke him.

"O Maimée! I have had such a lovely dream."

"Never mind your dream, child; you are wet through, make haste home, do."

"I can't walk, Maimée, I feel so stiff; you will have to carry me."

"A good thing I told Thomas to bring the carriage. I'll carry you to the keeper's lodge, and we must wait for Thomas."

"Now I can tell you my dream, Maimée, till Thomas comes. I saw Father standing in a beautiful garden, with such lovely flowers, and there were lots of angels, and some nice little boys and girls playing in the garden; but Father did not speak to the other children, only when he saw me he said, 'My little Guy, I want to speak to you,' and I said, 'Yes, Father, darling, I am coming, only you must send an angel to fetch me,' and then he spoke to one of the angels, and then you woke me up."

"Time I did, if that was what you were dreaming," said Maimée.

Guy was put to bed as soon as they got home, but neither he nor Maimée had much rest that

night. He was feverish and excited and, as he expressed it, he ached all over; he was worse in the morning, and the doctor was sent for.

All day Guy lay in pain, sometimes his mind wandered and he talked of his Father and the angels, sometimes he lay in a kind of stupor, unworthy of the name of sleep.

The next day he was worse, and the doctor became alarmed, and wished for a second opinion, so that evening a consultation was held.

Captain Maitland waylaid the doctors as they left the house, and begged to be told the worst.

"Is there any danger?" he asked.

"The greatest; he is suffering from acute rheumatism, and if, as we fear it will do, it reaches the heart, there is no hope," replied the doctors.

"A few hours will decide it one way or the other," added one.

"Can nothing be done to save him?" asked poor Captain Maitland, who could not bear the thought of losing this child who had wound himself so closely round his uncle's heart.

"Follow our directions closely, and try to rouse him from his grief. That morbid wish to die is one

of his worst symptoms." And with this advice the doctors took their departure.

There was little or no change in the child's condition for the next twenty-four hours, when Mrs. Maitland, who had been watching him, as he lay apparently sleeping for an hour or two, thought there was a decided alteration in his appearance when he awoke and opened his eyes. Whether it was for the better or not, she could not tell, and just as she rose to ring for Maimée to consult her, some one knocked at the door.

"Come in," said Mrs. Maitland.

"Is it the angel for me?" asked Guy.

Ah! Guy, why so impatient? It may be sweet to die when all that makes life precious is taken from us; but it is nobler far to live, if the life that is lived be to the glory of God.

## CHAPTER XI.

### *FATHERLESS.*

No ; it was no angel of death. As yet no mandate had gone forth to summon that wounded spirit to its Father's breast ; it was only Uncle Jack who had ridden across the island to a remote bay in the hope of finding some shells not in Guy's collection ; trusting that, if successful, Guy might be roused to look at them.

"Guy, you are better, my darling," were Uncle Jack's first words, as he took his place by the bedside, and, overcome with joy, he buried his head in the counterpane. Presently a little thin white hand was passed gently over the bowed head, and that voice, so dear to Captain Maitland's ears, whispered—

"Don't cry, Uncle Jack, Guy is going to stay with you."

"Thank God; then you feel much better, Guy, dear, don't you?" said Captain Maitland, taking the little wasted figure into his strong arms.

"Yes; and I have had a lovely dream, Uncle Jack. I saw Father in my dream, and he said, 'Guy, dear, I don't wish you to come just yet; wait till you are a man, and have finished the work God has for you to do, and then you will be nearer to me than you would be if you came now.' And I was going to say, 'Yes, Father, dear, I'll wait,' when I woke up and you knocked at the door. I thought at first it was the angel, and I was going to send him away, but I daresay, Father has told him not to come, so you need not be afraid, Uncle Jack," said Guy, in a low gentle voice, as he lay resting in his uncle's arms.

"I am not afraid; but don't talk any more, it tires you, my little man. Can you take this beef-tea Maimée has just brought?"

"Yes, if you feed me, Uncle Jack."

So Uncle Jack fed him, and for the next few days Guy cared for nothing except at his hands. It seemed as if the child had in some way transferred at least part of the love he had felt for his Father to his uncle.

He looked up to him now as his natural guardian. Whether he would offer him the same reverence and obedience he had latterly felt for Major Stafford was a problem Captain Maitland had yet to solve.

The experiment of the shells was a great success. Guy was quite excited about them. He made his uncle get all Major Stafford's shell-books and look through them till he found the names of the new specimens; and then he insisted on having the collection unpacked again to add these fresh ones.

"As I am not going to Father yet, it is no use keeping them packed up, Uncle Jack."

And Uncle Jack could scarcely have had a more congenial task than the unpacking of these shells. Nothing gave him greater pleasure than to be able to sweep away any of Guy's morbid fancies.

"Where did you find them, Uncle Jack?"

Captain Maitland told him.

"Oh! I have never been there; you must take me as soon as I am well enough, please, Uncle Jack. We can ride over and take our luncheon," began Guy with more animation than he had displayed since his Father's death, but suddenly checking him-



self, he burst into tears, murmuring through his sobs—

“O Uncle Jack! I do want him so; everything minds me of him. Why did he go and leave Guy?”

“Poor little man, don’t cry so!” said Captain Maitland, brushing some tears from his eyes as he spoke. “Look here, Guy, how would you like to leave Malta, and go back to England?”

“Very much, but we shall be sent to India next, shan’t we, Uncle Jack?” said Guy, who always identified himself with his uncle’s regiment.

“The regiment will probably, but I have no doubt I can exchange, and if not I can sell out, and apply for a militia adjutancy. This climate is not good for you, and you are my first care after Aunt Clara now.”

“But what will Aunt Clara say?”

“I expect Aunt Clara will always say ‘yes’ to anything Guy desires; at any rate, we can ask her.”

“Yes,” said Guy wearily. “I suppose I shall always do what I like, now Father is gone.”

“Guy, I don’t know much about such things,” said Captain Maitland humbly, “but you know God

is our Father, and He sees everything we do now much more plainly than your dear Father did when he was here on earth; so don't you think we ought both to try and do exactly what He likes, and not what we like best ourselves?"

"Yes, I think we should; but now Father is gone, how shall I know what I ought to do?"

"Do what Aunt Clara and Maimée and I tell you."

"But supposing you told me wrong, like you did the day I rode in the races?" objected Guy.

"Then God will punish me; but, Guy, if that were to come once again, I would not let you ride now. I will never let you do wrong if I can help it. God will tell me how to take care of you, if I ask Him; won't He?"

"Yes, only you must not forget to ask Him every day. I shall be obliged to obey you, I suppose, now, just as I did Father; shan't I, Uncle Jack?"

"Yes, until you are old enough to take care of yourself."

Guy was very thoughtful after this; the prospect of an involuntary obedience required consideration! Captain Maitland, however, was

satisfied with the conversation, and felt sure the child would obey him now that he understood the obedience was to be as unto God. A few days later Guy was sitting on a footstool at Mrs. Maitland's knee; he was looking over some pictures, and pondering over them, while his aunt was fanning herself with one hand, and running the long slim jewelled fingers of the other through the child's curls. Suddenly Guy looked up.

"Aunt Clara, I want to have my curls cut off before I go out again."

Mrs. Maitland shut up her fan with a dexterous jerk, which experience had rendered perfect.

"Have your curls cut off, Guy? Why, my darling child, you must be mad!"

"No, I am not, Aunt Clara. Can Maimée go for the hairdresser to-day, please?"

"Certainly not. Why, Guy, it would spoil you. I won't hear of it. What made you think of such a thing?"

"I want them cut off. I shall cut them off with Maimée's big scissors, if the hairdresser does not come."

"I shall be very angry if you do, Guy, and so

will Uncle Jack," said Mrs. Maitland; and certainly no crime Guy could have committed would have seemed so enormous in her eyes as the cutting off of his curls.

"I shall ask Uncle Jack first," said Guy.

"Here he is; so you can ask him now," said Mrs. Maitland, as her husband came into the room.

"Jack, Guy wants to have his curls cut off. Did you ever hear such a thing?"

"Well, he is getting rather big for long hair, I think, Clara," said Captain Maitland.

"Big! really, Jack, you are as bad as the child. I shall consider it positively wicked if you allow it to be done."

"Guy, what made you think of it? Why do you want your curls cut off?" inquired Captain Maitland.

"I'll tell you, Uncle Jack," said Guy, climbing on to his uncle's knee, "I want to be a man like Father as soon as I can, and he didn't have curls; 'sides, they remind me so of him, he was very fond of playing with them, and I can't bear other people's doing it."

"They shall be cut off to-morrow if you wish,

Guy. I will send for a hairdresser," said Uncle Jack decidedly.

He spoke almost sharply, but it was only to hide his emotion, for he could not but be touched by the child's motive; and even Mrs. Maitland, who had overheard Guy's reason, said no more, but quietly wiped away a few tears with a lace handkerchief.

So the curls were cut off the very next day, much to the grief of Maimée and Mrs. Maitland, though both admitted their darling was still the prettiest child in Malta—"though," as Maimée added, "that was not saying much for his beauty, since there weren't a score of pretty children in the place." That same day Guy was allowed to go out for the first time since his illness; and Captain Maitland racked his brains all the morning to think of some place to take the child which would not remind him of his father. Guy himself solved the difficulty by suggesting the market, which, on account of its odoriferous nature, had never been a favourite resort of Major Stafford's.

Here, for a time, Guy forgot his sorrow, and was occupied in admiring the huge bouquets of wonderful flowers—many of them strangers to English eyes

—the piles of prickly pears, the huge bunches of grapes; the wonderful fish, at which one looked without longing, and wondered who could dare to eat them; the baskets of sea anemones and seaweeds, all edible; whitebait by the hundred, rows of quail, snipe, and various other small birds; dates in clusters just as they grew; oranges also fresh from the trees, with a stalk and here and there a leaf pulled with them, which assured you positively you were not in England. Poultry of all sorts, and mostly of an inferior kind, was there; and, what amused Guy most, a stall of Maltese terriers, from which Captain Maitland could with difficulty tear him away, and when he succeeded in doing so, it was only on condition that he should be brought again to look at one particular puppy with which Guy was particularly struck. This puppy gave the child an object in his daily walk, and Captain Maitland made a bargain in very bad Italian with the stall-keeper to reserve the dog for him, thinking it wiser for the present to let it remain with its owner, partly because it was still very young, but chiefly because, if Guy possessed it, he would no longer care to walk to the market, and as time

went on there was only one other walk he could be induced to take : this was to his Father's grave.

" You see I don't miss him there and in the market, Uncle Jack, because we never went there ; but I hate all the other places," he explained.

One day Captain Maitland was walking down the Strada Reale, on his way home from the market, when suddenly Guy darted from his side across the road to a little girl who was running by the side of a private soldier. The children seemed delighted to meet. Guy apparently was asking some questions of his little friend, and then, rather to his uncle's disgust, he kissed the little girl and ran back to Captain Maitland.

" Guy, you should not do so. What on earth made you kiss that child ?" said Uncle Jack rather sharply.

" It was the little girl I gave my thank-offering to, and she is very fond of it, and takes care of it, so I kissed her."

" Well, don't do that kind of thing again. She is only a poor child, you know."

Guy made no reply ; indeed he did not speak again till they reached home. It was only a few

minutes' walk, and Uncle Jack did not observe the boy's silence.

Half an hour later, on passing Guy's room to the drawing-room, he heard some one sobbing, and looking in he found Maimée nursing Guy, who was crying bitterly, his little heart shaking with heavy sobs, while Maimée was weeping also, and Mrs. Maitland looking helplessly on, imploring them both not to heat themselves on this sultry day.

"What on earth is the matter?" asked Captain Maitland.

"O Jack! it is all your doing. What have you said to the child? We can do nothing with him; all he says is, 'Father would not have minded; I want Father.' I do wish you would be more careful. Poor little Guy, he will make himself quite ill," said Mrs. Maitland.

"Give him to me, Maimée, perhaps I can quiet him; we have misunderstood each other. Just leave him with me for a little while, please," said Captain Maitland, taking the child on to his knee.

"Guy, what is it? I did not mean to be unkind to you, my darling. Was it because I told



you not to kiss that little girl?" asked Uncle Jack, when they were alone.

"Yes; I thought you were angry with me, and I did not know it was wicked to kiss her. Father let me the day I took the thank-offering, and I shall never know what is right and what is not now he is gone, and I want him so bad, I do," and the sobs began again.

"Don't, Guy, don't, there's a dear boy; I can't bear to hear you. It was Uncle Jack who was wicked, if any one was; you have done nothing wrong. Only I did not like to see you kissing a soldier's child in the middle of Strada Reale, and I am afraid I was down upon you rather sharply. Don't cry, Guy, I won't do it again; and if you like I'll take you to see the child another day, or you shall have her up here to tea with you, and she can bring the doll with her."

"Thank you, Uncle Jack; and you won't be cross to Guy again, will you? 'Cause it makes him want Father so bad, and crying makes his head ache."

"Poor child, I am so sorry. Come and have some tea with Aunt Clara, and I'll put something

on to your head to cure it, and then I have something to tell you."

The "something" was that the puppy was to be Guy's the next day, and this new interest helped in a great measure to heal the wound that had just been opened afresh. One thing Captain Maitland now determined upon, was to get Guy to England as soon as possible. Here in Malta there was so much to remind him of his loss; every street was associated with Major Stafford in some way, go where they would something was sure to turn up to bring him forcibly back to the memory. Then there was a difficulty about educating the child out in Malta, and they felt sure he would be happier if he had regular employment, so Captain Maitland decided to sell out unless he could exchange within a month. A few days later, however, he received a letter offering him a militia-adjutancy in the south of England. There was an excellent school for little boys in the town, to which Guy could go till he was old enough for Eton; and Captain Maitland jumped at the offer.

The next ten days were spent in packing and preparing to go, in which work Guy took a great

interest, and insisted on helping; then they went to an hotel for a day or two as the mail was late, having had bad weather between Port Said and Malta. She arrived in due course, and the Maitlands, with Guy and Maimée, went on board the same evening.

At sunset they sailed. Before them lay a cloudless sky of gold and crimson, and an endless stretch of ocean, calm as a lake and gleaming like an opal under the sunset sky; behind them, waxing dimmer and dimmer, the white walls of Valletta, until suddenly, for there is little or no twilight-at Malta, her towers disappeared in the darkness, and nothing was to be seen but sea and sky, and the stars which now shone forth and hung like great lamps in the heavens.

The last word Guy heard in Malta was *Addio* from a Maltese servant, and in its fullest meaning it shall be ours also.

*Addio.*

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